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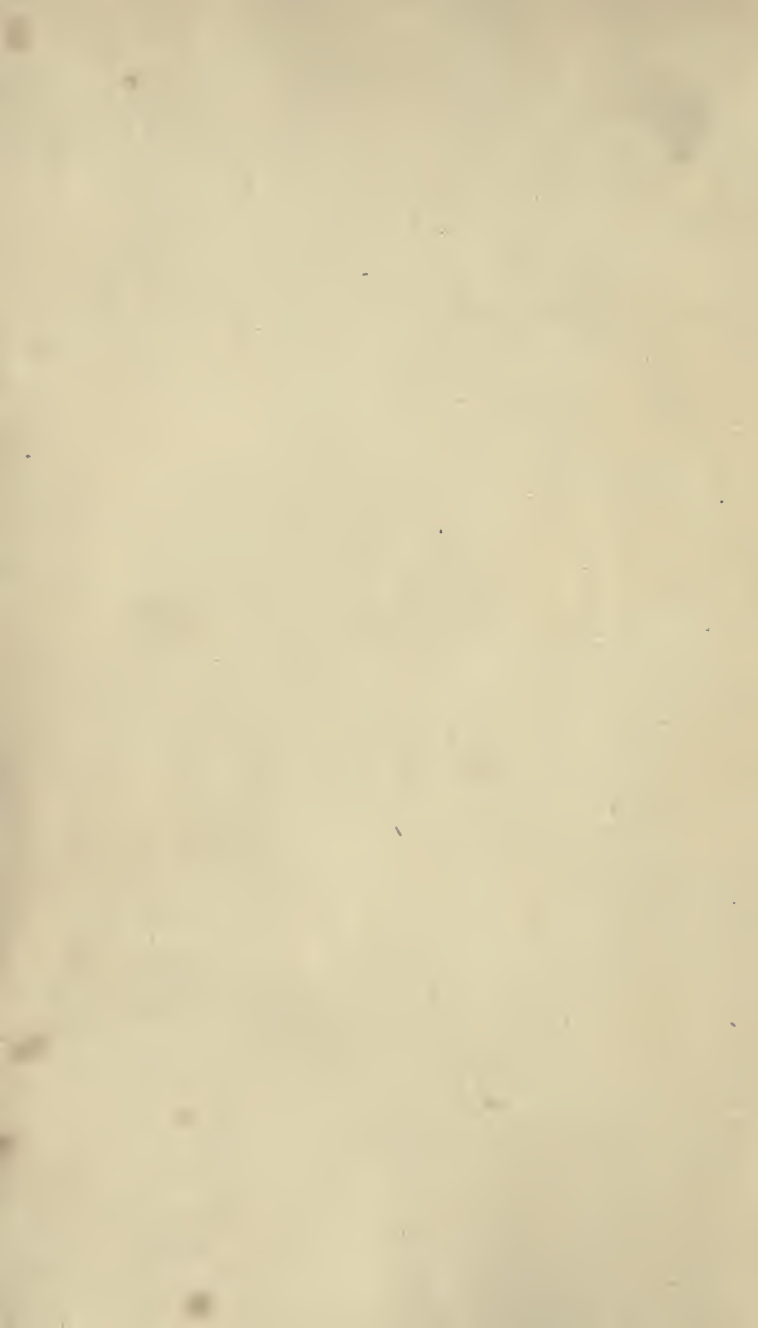


*William George Prescott.*

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THE ERNE.

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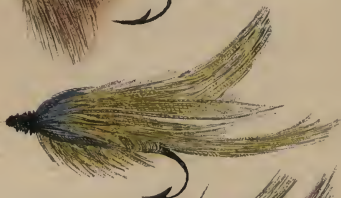
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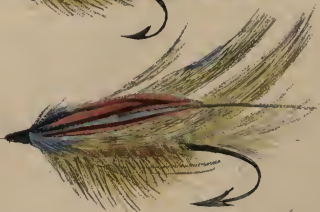
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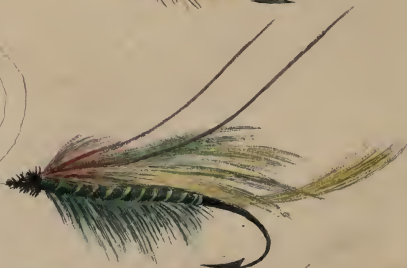
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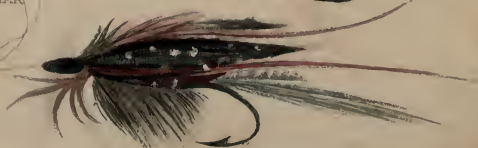
KILLMORE.



JACK  
THE GIANT KILLER.



POUL WEATHER  
JACK.



William W. Norton  
Prescott

# THE ERNE.

its

LEGENDS AND ITS FLY FISHING,

BY

The Rev.<sup>d</sup> Henry Newland.



The Fairy Fly.



THE ERNE,  
ITS LEGENDS AND ITS FLY-FISHING.

BY

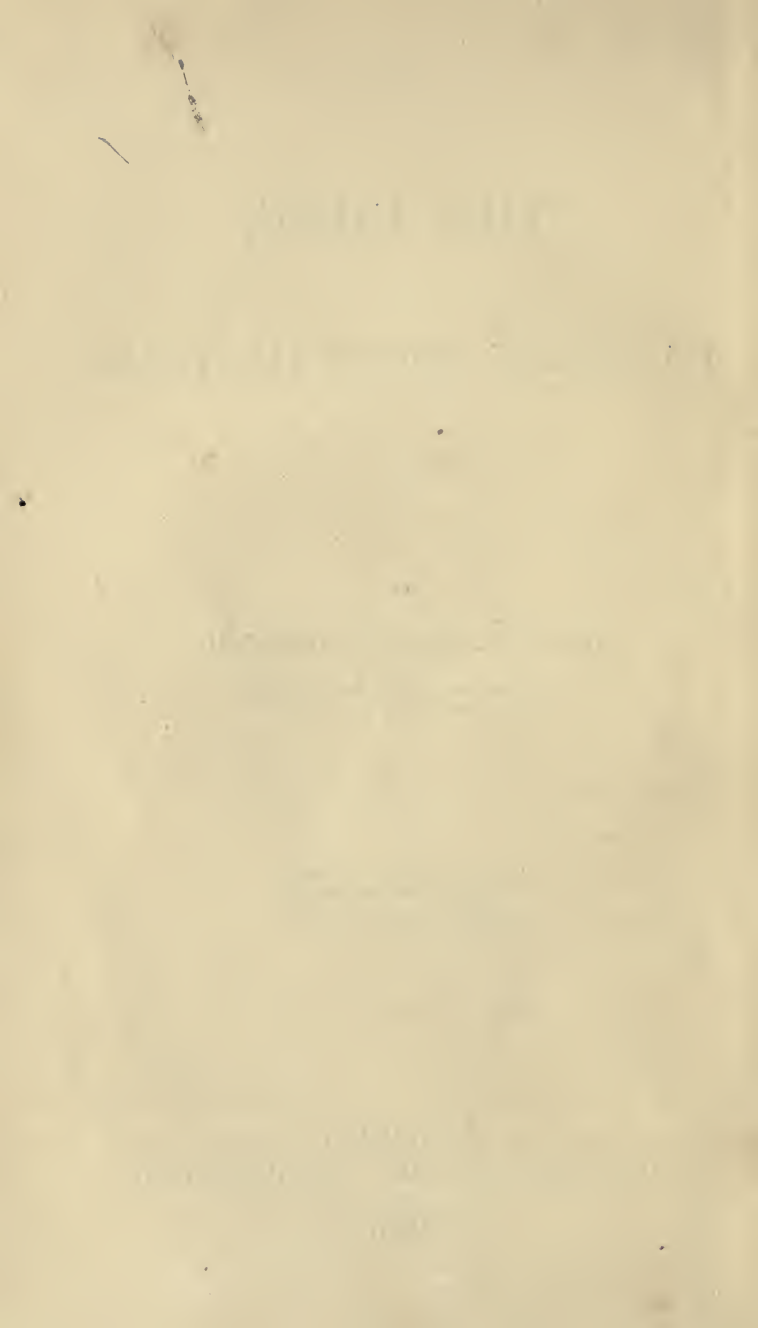
THE REV. HENRY NEWLAND,  
RECTOR AND VICAR OF WESTBOURNE.

Could those days but come again,  
With their *clouds* and *showers*,  
I would give the hopes of years  
For those bygone hours.

LONDON :  
CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193 PICCADILLY.  

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1851.





Dedicatory Epistle

TO

SIR CHARLES TAYLOR, BART.,

OF HOLLYCOMBE.

---

MY DEAR SIR CHARLES TAYLOR,

If ever man had a right to a dedication, most certainly you have a right to the dedication of this book, for, had it not been for you, book there would have been none. It was on your lawn at Hollycombe that I first wielded the two-handed rod, and threw my wavering and unpractised line at a white swan's feather; it was from the window of your travelling carriage that I caught my first view of the Erne; and it was under the tuition of your own faithful Pat Gal-

lagher, that, on the shores of the Moirua, I landed my first salmon. To you I owe some of the pleasantest days of my life—to you, therefore, I dedicate their reminiscences.

All that I have ever contemplated in writing this little book, is to give my readers some idea of a fisherman's life,—with the faint hope, perhaps, of drawing attention to the present very imperfect state of the salmon laws. I have attempted nothing in the way of journal—nothing in the way of character. My Squire, Captain, Parson, and Scholar, are but the representatives of the three or four squires, the five or six captains, the dozen or so of parsons, and the innumerable multitude of scholars, whom we have, from time to time, met and consorted with in one or other of our pleasant summer campaigns. Sorry should I be even if your honest old William, whose admirable curries, and elaborately-polished

shoes, were often the only reminiscences we had of civilised life, should identify himself with my fictitious Thomas.

But while I have avoided individualising my characters, I will vouch for the authenticity of my facts : they may not have happened in the precise order in which I have arranged them, nor exactly in the very localities in which I have placed them, but facts they are, and unembellished facts, too. I have not added an ounce to the weight of my fish, nor a fish to the recorded amount of a day's capture ; everything commemorated has been duly chronicled at one time or other, either in my own journals or in those of a friend. I am the identical Parson whose hat was taken off by the eagle ; my father is the identical Squire who landed the schoolmaster. While some of the anecdotes, such as the pious wish of the old woman about the mould-candles, and the subsequent catch of the heavy salmon from

the boat, you may very fairly appropriate to your own share.

In like manner, I will vouch for the truth of my legends. I do not mean to say that I will record my conviction that St. Columba did curse the Enchanted Throw, or that Prince Slieven and his bride did vanish on a moonbeam ; but I do vouch for this, that those who told me the legends did firmly believe both the one and the other. That the legends are not fabricated, but compiled ; they were collected from the fishing attendants, and are the reminiscences of many an hour of bright sunshine and breezeless water, when neither trout nor salmon could be persuaded to break the surface.

Of the facts connected with the destruction of the intrusive slob-weirs I do not speak from personal knowledge, for that summer, you may remember, I spent in Norway ; nor will I answer for the very words put into the mouths of my characters, any more

than Livy will answer for the very words put into the mouths of his, but of the facts I am as certain as if I had seen them. The account from which I took them was written on the spot, and they were verified by myself during a subsequent visit which I made to the scene of action.

In this, as in the rest of my story, I have purposely confused my characters ; and thus, while I vouch for the absolute truth of the acts, I will say nothing of the actors, except that, on no occasion whatever, the deeds recorded were performed by the persons to whom they are attributed.

Mr. Michael Rowan I chose for my leader, upon the principle of Charles Fox, who, when picked up drunk, gave his name to the inquiring watchman as Samuel Wilberforce ; namely, that he was the very last person in the whole world who would be imagined capable of such an act. There *was* a leader, no doubt, and that leader was



the remarkable character that I describe ; but poor Micky Rowan was remarkable for nothing, except the greatest amount of in-offensive stupidity that ever was possessed by genuine Celt.

The drawings which illustrate this record of our acts, are selections from some forty or fifty sketches of the place made by my brother. In all our wanderings it has been his custom to keep a sort of pictorial journal, commemorating by pencil the scenes and events of our travel, quite as well as I could record them by pen ; and these are a few stray leaves from his log.

You will say, perhaps, that a description of "Days on the Erne," omitting all mention of the renters of the fishery, their hospitable house, and the merry evenings we used to pass there, must needs be an imperfect one. Admitted. But, without taking an American liberty with the sanctity of private life, I could not very well describe

them. My Squire, my Parson, my Captain, may be anybody, or everybody, or nobody ; but, under whatever appellation I had introduced our entertainers, I should but have imitated the prudent reserve of him who scrupulously abstained from naming his friend on account of his rank, “because he was at this present time Lord Chancellor of England.” I must be content, therefore, to say in my own character, that, among my reminiscences of the Erne, by no means the least pleasing are those connected with the Miss Shiels, and with the evenings passed at their house.

And now, farewell ! Pleasant is the Erne, and pleasant were its breezy days, and pleasant was the cozy evening’s fire at Mother Johnstone’s.

Could those days but come again,  
With their *clouds* and *showers*,  
I would give the hopes of years  
For those bygone hours.

But it may not be. "Time rolls his ceaseless course." The spring of freshness and novelty has passed away. Many a green bank have I trodden since those days—many a rapid and many a pool have I thrown my fly over; but there is no "fisherman's home" like the old low-browed room at Belleek, and no river in the whole world like my first love—the Erne.

Pleasant are its memories; and among them, that I subscribe myself

Your faithful friend,

And (in a piscatorial sense)

Affectionate pupil,

HENRY NEWLAND.

*Boveysand, Plymouth,*

*Sept. 23, 1850.*

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### THE ICHTHYOGRAPHY OF THE ERNE.

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THE Erne is decidedly the best fisherman's river in Ireland, and can be equalled but by few anywhere. Its whole length between its parent lake and the sea may be about nine miles, but of these, four, or at most five, are the only available portion to the salmon fisher, the upper part being too smooth and too deep to afford any very great chance of rising a fish.

The general character of the fishable portion is a succession of extensive pools, connected by channels of various width, cut by the force of the water through rocks of limestone, which, in various strata, intersect its course. The dip being to the northward, the most abrupt parts lie on the northern bank, that on the south being generally more shelving. The bottoms of the pools are gravelly. Those of the channels and rapids are of rock, singularly jagged and uneven. The body of water in the river is considerable; and, as the fall between Belleek and the sea is great, the force of the current when contracted within these channels is perfectly irresistible. In the short course of five miles there are no less than four falls, those of Rose Isle, the Captain's, Kathleen's, and the Great Fall of Ballyshannon, and besides these there are numerous rapids.

The pools are the resting-places of the salmon, in their progress from the sea to the head-waters and fords where they breed; but, as their habit is to lie on the bottom, the water here is generally too deep for them to see the fly. They are mostly caught at the

heads of the rapids, close to where the water begins to break on the rocks at the entrance of the channels. These particular points, which are well known to the water-keepers, are called, technically, “Throws,” and are all named. The number of them is about thirty; but there are others of minor importance, which are seldom visited, except when the number of fishermen is very great.

The still break of the fall is, generally speaking, the place most favourable for catching salmon; but all the throws do not bear this description,—the Sally Bush, the Bank of Ireland, the water between the Grass Guard and Kathleen’s Falls, and one or two others, bearing mostly the character of Rapids.

#### NO. 1. BELLEEK POOL.

Above Rose Isle Falls is Belleek Pool, one of the best throws on the river on a rough day, but hopeless without wind. The depth of water is great, and the largest sized fish are found here. It may be fished in part from St. George’s Island, and also from the left bank; but to command it

satisfactorily the fisherman will require a boat, which is easily procurable. This throw is without dangers of any kind, and no one can lose a fish once hooked in it, except from his own fault.

#### NO. 2. ROSE ISLE.

From Belleek Pool the water leaps over a broad fall of inconsiderable depth, across the head of which there is a safe ford ; it then passes Rose Island, by a channel in length about a hundred yards, over a perfectly smooth limestone bottom, interrupted only by three rocks in its course : these form its principal dangers, but are indicated clearly enough by the curling of the water. The whole channel here is hardly more than twenty yards in width, and in consequence the rush of waters is prodigious. This is Rose Isle Throw, at all times good, but particularly to be sought on a bright, still day, when the other throws afford little or no chance. Nevertheless, the difficulty of landing the fish here is great ; the rapidity of the water, the hidden rocks, and the confined space (scarcely exceeding a hundred yards



by twenty), and the great fall of Rose Isle below it, give altogether a better chance of losing than of landing the fish. As good a plan as any, for a man of nerve and quickness, is to stand at the lower end and urge the fish down the fall; but in this there is great danger of cutting the line against the sharp ridge. This throw is fished from the right bank.

### THE SHORT THROWS.

From Rose Isle Throw, the water passes in one collected body down the falls, which are, as it were, in two steps, with a turnhole between them, and is finally received into a magnificent basin, cut by its own force, in the solid rock below. Its course then continues through a succession of rapids for nearly a mile, when it expands, on reaching more level country, into a flat of several hundred yards in width, and nearly, or quite, half a mile in length, terminating in the Monk's Pool. Up to this point from Belleek, its course has been through a ravine formed by overhanging rocks covered with wood. These rise in many places perpendicularly to the

height of fifty or sixty feet, and that so immediately from the water's edge as to leave no passage between them and the river. In the course of this mile there are three salmon throws to be found; these are confined in point of size, and of little promise; while the access is so difficult, and, in consequence of the overhanging rocks, the fishing so bad, that few seek them.

### NO. 3. THE MONK'S FORD.

Beyond this ravine the river assumes a quiet character. The rocks disappear, and the banks, receding on either side, present an open country, with a border of soft turf on either side shelving down to the water. The bottom is gravelly, interrupted only by salmon graves, as the places where that fish lays up his spawn are technically called. This is an excellent place for trout, especially in the evening; at the head of it is an extensive eel-weir; and, immediately above the Monk's Pool, it is crossed by a ford, which, when the depth of water on it is not much above or below  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet, is an excellent salmon throw: it is without any dangers what-



ever, as the fish, on being hooked, invariably rush down stream into the depths of the Monk's Pool, the bottom of which is smooth and muddy. The ford is formed by a narrow ridge of gravel marked by a ripple, over which the fisherman will have to wade for a hundred or a hundred and fifty yards before he comes to the throw, and by which he may, if he pleases, cross the river altogether; but a certain degree of care is requisite, for any deviation from the right path up stream would place the fisherman in water much too deep to be comfortable, while a similar deviation down stream would immediately plunge him beyond his depth altogether.

#### NO. 4. POINT OF THE MULLINS.

Having passed this extensive pool, the river is again contracted by the Mullins point to a width of about a hundred yards, having rounded which, it retains the same width for a quarter of a mile, broken, however, by three islands in the middle of the stream. The course of the water passing these islands is under the left bank, where

the channel is both rapid and deep, while that between the islands and the right bank is easily fordable. Here are collected a whole cluster of throws, forming, when taken together, the best part of the river. At the upper point, and fished from the right bank, is the point of the Mullins, and opposite to it a throw of no very great pretensions. These lie on either side of the outlet of the Monk's Pool, and present a surface very little broken. The Mullins Throw is very deep, and the resort of large fish, but it requires a strong breeze and a ripple to be fished with effect: it is, however, held in high estimation.

#### NOS. 5 AND 6. BANK OF IRELAND.

The next throw is the Bank of Ireland, fished from the left bank, or from one of the islands. This is probably the best throw above Ballyshannon bridge, and the water, being deep, rapid, and rough, is equally calculated for all weathers. The lower portion of it, marked by a projecting point, is called the Black Rock Throw. Both these throws

are in highly dangerous ground, the whole bottom being strewed with rocks. These, in fact, occasion the roughness of the water, and facilitate the sport in still weather. The fisherman who succeeds in landing his fish here may flatter himself with the idea of being a tolerably skilful performer, while he who loses his fish will never be without a good excuse to cover what may, after all, have been his want of skill. The most dangerous part of the throw is a cluster of rocks which divide the Bank of Ireland from the Black Rock Throw; a tight line is here absolutely necessary, at any risk.

#### NO. 7. THE SALLY BUSH.

This throw lies on the right bank, somewhat higher than the Bank of Ireland; it is a rough throw, pretty safe, and the resort mostly of small fish. The fisherman must wade from the right bank of the river, till he arrives at the upper island, and, proceeding from this some ten or twelve yards farther into the stream, he will be able to cover the middle of the river.

Nos. 8 AND 9. TAIL OF THE ISLAND AND  
FOX'S THROWS.

From the Sally Bush he will proceed (likewise by wading) to the lower island, at the lower end of which he will find the throw called the Tail of the Island; immediately opposite to which, on the left bank, is Fox's Throw. Both of these are excellent, but the latter is confined to one spot. The fisherman must wade from the left bank to a large flat stone lying on the shoulder of the rapid, which commences here, and his fishing is confined to the distance he can reach with his fly. Nor is the Island Throw very extensive, as the bottom is too soft for wading to any distance. They are, however, both perfectly safe; so that, having hooked a fish, the fisherman may, in the common course of things, consider himself sure of him.

Nos. 10 AND 11. MOSS ROW.

The rapid beginning at Fox's Throw is about two hundred yards in length, and falls

into a deep, still indent of the river, called Moss Row, or, rather, Mois Ruah, on either side of which are throws bearing that name. The course of the water being under the right bank, the fisherman on that side is able, while standing on dry ground, to command the best part of it; but he is sadly incommoded by a steep hill, which, rising just behind him, is covered with wood down to the water's edge. The upper part of this throw is deep, still water, with an unbroken surface, and requiring a ripple; but the lower part is perfect, unless the weather be very bright. By this time the fisherman has cleared himself from the wooded hill, and has arrived at shoal water. Having waded into this, and got out about twenty-five yards of line, he will command a spot where he is almost sure of success, except in very dry seasons when the water is low, when the place becomes fordable and the fish do not lie in it.

The upper part of the same throw is commanded to greater advantage from the left bank. Here the fisherman must wade about a hundred yards from the shore, and, having



done so, will be able to command what is considered, on a windy day, one of the best throws in the river; but wading to this point is attended with peculiar difficulties: the depth is considerable, the bottom exceedingly rough and uneven, and the current powerful.

#### No. 12. EARL'S THROW.

At the lower part of this extensive indent is Earl's Throw, at the head of the rapid bearing the same name. It is good at all seasons, but particularly when the water is high. At this time the fishing-ground commences at the stone dyke about forty yards above the rapid, and from this point continues to the break of the water; but at other times the throw is confined to the shoulder of the fall, as the water above it will be too shallow for fish to lie in: but in this case the fisherman must be able to send out a long line, and must wade to the second stone at the head of the rapid. When the water is so low that the lower part of Moss Row becomes a ford, Earl's Throw may be fished from the right bank.

## No. 13. THE CAPTAIN'S THROW.

Beyond this rapid the river expands into a deep pool, and receives on its right bank a small tributary of dark water, which in rainy weather tends to discolour the river. The pool is nearly a mile in length, and from two to three hundred yards in width; it abounds with pike, but is not calculated for fly-fishing. On its left bank stands the house of Mr. Tredennick, surrounded by timber trees, and rather pretty, but so situated as to command no view whatever of this splendid river. At the lower part of the grounds belonging to this house, and at the extremity of the pool, is situated the Captain's Throw, which may be fished from either bank of the river; it begins at the point where the river, being again contracted, forms another rapid. In one respect it differs from all the other throws: as the width of the river here does not exceed thirty yards, a fly, thrown from the right bank by an expert arm, will strike the ferns on the left bank; and ought to be so thrown, as the best of the water is close to the left bank. Notwithstanding the

rapidity of the water, the current, owing to its great depth, is comparatively smooth. On the right bank the throw extends for fifty or sixty yards; but the wading is peculiarly dangerous, the bottom, which is of rock, being eaten by the water into round deep holes, quite deep enough to imprison the foot, while the water runs with sufficient velocity to make it extremely likely that a man so caught will be thrown down, and in such a position will hardly escape severe bodily injury. The throw is much more easily fished from the left bank, though here the standing is confined to a single point, a cliff which rises perpendicularly out of the water to the height of twenty-five or thirty feet. The largest fish are to be met with here. The strength of the current is its only danger. It is not without rocks, but the fisherman, being so high above his fish, need not fear them. Should the fish, however, head down stream, the fisherman must not allow him more than fifty yards of line, as it is impossible to follow him, and the strength of the current then becomes too great to permit him to turn. The fish, there-



fore, must be turned at all hazards before he reaches this point. There is but one place at which the assistant can reach the water for the purpose of gaffing, which is formed by a rock that has fallen into the water.

#### No. 14. THE CURSED THROW.

The Captain's Fall, which, in fact, is more like a very steep and sudden rapid than a waterfall, is in two steps, with a broad turnhole between them called Poul na Gair, or the Goat's Pool. The second shoot falls into the Cursed Throw, in which, though as promising a place, to all appearance, as any in the river, no fish has ever been taken within the memory of man. The true cause of this may probably be found in the natural history of the salmon, one of whose peculiarities is, that no fish will stop or feed while he sees a difficulty before him. The Cursed Pool is comparatively a short one, and the upper end of it is violently agitated by the shoot of waters from the Captain's Fall. The fish, on ascending the little rapid which connects this basin with Johnstone's Pool

below it, in all probability feels this agitation, and, in consequence, makes no stay there, but rushes at the fall at once, resting nowhere till he has safely reached the shelter of the Captain's Rock. The same cause may account for the unproductiveness of the Short Throws, which to all appearance are promising enough.

#### No. 15. JOHNSTONE'S THROW.

The pool below this is winding, still, deep, to a certain degree reedy, and too soft at the bottom to allow much wading; it is, however, full of large trout and pike, the former of which are sometimes caught of five, six, and even seven pounds weight; the latter, which, as well as the trout, will sometimes take the salmon-fly, of fabulous size. In this pool there is a means of crossing the river by the embankment of an eel-weir. There is also a very good throw for salmon on a windy day, called Johnstone's Throw; it is fished from a broad flagstone on the right bank, and requires a long line: a boat, however, is necessary in order to command the whole

of it, as, owing to the softness of the bottom and other causes, it is inaccessible from the left. This throw is perfectly safe.

#### NO. 16. THE GRASS GUARD.

The Grass Guard, situated at the lower end of the same pool, is the head of a series of rapids commencing at this point, continuing with more or less violence for somewhat more than half a mile, and ending at Kathleen's Falls. The Grass Guard may be fished from either bank, but best from the left: in either case the throw is confined to as far as the fisherman can reach from a single stone; and on the left bank he must on no account allow himself to be tempted by the smoothness of the water beyond a very remarkable flat white stone, about fifteen yards from the bank; the current here being really much stronger than its quietness would lead him to imagine. It is a safe throw, with but one danger,—a rock completely under water, and perfectly undistinguishable, lying almost in the middle of the stream, but nearer to the right bank, and

about thirty yards above the break of the rapid. The fisherman should not venture on this throw without an attendant, because, on hooking a fish, it will be necessary to land as soon as possible—an operation which the ruggedness of the loose stones at the bottom and the strength of the current render difficult to a man who has a fish on, while missing his footing would be followed by almost certain destruction. Should the fisherman be tempted to kill his fish from the white stone, which he can easily do, the salmon, when exhausted, will be carried down the rapids, floating past him at about three yards' distance, so that it will be impossible for him to get a pull on his fish without breaking his rod. On landing, he may leave his man on the white stone with the gaff, and let his fish tail on to him while he keeps a pull on him from above; or he may gaff him in a little indent on the shore: but in that case he must take care of a weedy point, which runs much farther into the water than it seems to do. This throw requires wind, but is particularly good.

Nos. 17, 18, 19, 20. SOD DITCH. EEL WEIR.  
COS NA WONNA. READE'S THROW.

The rapids, for the first three or four hundred yards, are far too violent for fish to lie in ; but beyond that, the river, increasing in depth and decreasing in turbulence, affords six throws, three on each bank, which on bright still days are almost the only parts of the lower river that can be relied upon. This spot is precisely where a young hand ought to begin ; for though a long line may be advantageous, a short one will command excellent water, and its turbulent character renders fine fishing altogether superfluous. These throws are always full of fish, and, though these generally are not of the largest size, now and then a monster may be found who will try the goodness of the tackle. The ground here is much safer than it appears to be, as the rocks, though numerous, are mostly too small to afford shelter to a salmon, though, of course, quite sufficient to cut a line that is not kept tight.



## No. 21. KATHLEEN'S FALL.

Below these, the water is collected into a long narrow shoot, in some places not fifteen yards across, with a considerable slope, which bears the name of Kathleen's Falls, though, like those of the Captain's Throw, they are more like very violent rapids. Having rushed through this narrow gate, they again widen out to three or four hundred yards, presenting another of those magnificent pools, which terminates only at the Bridge of Ballyshannon. This is a gravelly bottom, good breeding ground, and full of salmon graves; but nothing is to be caught in it, except trout. The throw, which is not very good, lies at the break of the fall.

## THE GREAT POOL OF BALLYSHANNON.

The pool between the bridge and the Great Falls is by far the most killing station on the river; parts of it may be reached from the bridge, from the tanyard wall on the left bank, and from the Boxes on the right; but to fish it satisfactorily

the fisherman should, if he has the power, secure a boat. This pool contains a great number of native fish — that is to say, fish that were spawned on its shallows; but, besides these, every fish that enters the river rests for some time in this pool, in order to get rid of the sea-lice, before taking his passage to his native bank : for it should be observed, every fish spawns where he has been spawned himself. From this circumstance, the fisherman is not only surrounded by shoals of fish, but these fish actually take the fly more readily than they do on any other part of the river. It is a great mistake to imagine that a salmon is a bold fish, because he will sometimes rise close to a boat. This is only on his first coming out of the sea ; he very shortly becomes cautious and shy, and, in fact, though the river must necessarily be always full of red fish — that is to say, fish that have been in it for some time — they are very seldom taken.

On all other throws, where the fish sport, that is to say, throw themselves out of the water, it is an infallible sign of a bad day ; but on this it may be disregarded, because

every fish, on arriving from the salt-water, will, as soon as he has rested himself from the leap, begin to throw himself out of the water, for the purpose of knocking off the sea-lice. It may be questioned whether the fish so engaged will take the fly, but he does not prevent his neighbour from doing so.

It is the custom of the river, that any fisherman, having taken possession of any one of these throws, is considered as the sole possessor, as long as he thinks proper to remain, and no one will interfere with him. The bridge is, however, an exception to this rule. At this spot may be seen three, or perhaps four, rods, all working away at the same time from different arches, the only courtesy being, that no fisherman may throw his line across the ground commanded by the line of another.

It is here that the pot-hunters and tyros in the art resort, for no skill is required in hooking the fish, and very little in landing him when hooked. The fisherman has only to guard against his fish running up stream through the arches, which, as the water below is deep and that above shallow, the



fish himself has very little inclination to do ; and then the high standing ground, the unlimited range of deep water, uninterrupted by danger of any kind, and the gentleness of the current, give the fisherman every possible advantage. There is a tradition of an immense fish hooked here that never was checked, but gallantly took the falls and made off to sea with some score yards of line behind him. This may be true, but certain it is that no ordinary fish, well hooked, ought ever to be lost here.

For many reasons, however, the bridge is a disagreeable throw, and is avoided by all real fishermen, except so far as a casual cast as they pass up the river ; though more fish are killed from it than from any other place whatever, except perhaps from a boat on the pool itself : here the range is greater, and from the power of making, under all circumstances, a fair wind, the whole is fished with facility and effect. From this cause less skill is required here than on the wild open river, while there is little or no difficulty in killing the fish when once hooked, as the whole bottom of this great sheet of water is

perfectly free from rocks; with the exception of two, which are found at the lower end, small in themselves and by no means dangerous.

The Tanyard and Boxes are disagreeable throws in themselves, and good only on account of the number of fish in them; they form the head of the Great Fall. The first is fished from dry land, the other by wading some thirty or forty yards along a sort of breakwater immediately above the Falls.

Such is the Erne: after which it only remains to say, that the number of fish which it contains is altogether inconceivable — salmon, eels, trout, pike, perch; but none of them, excepting the two former, valued or preserved. These, however, are sources of great profit.

These fish — the salmon and the eel — equally affect both the sea and the fresh water, with this singular difference, — the salmon enters the fresh water to spawn, the eel descends to the sea for the same purpose. The salmon returns annually, the eel never. The salmon fry, five inches in length, de-

scend to the sea in spring. The eel fry come up in autumn, when about the size of knitting-needles. The salmon are taken as they ascend, the eel as they descend. The salmon never moves by night, and the eel never moves by day. On an average season, about a hundred tons of salmon are taken and sixty of eels; and as the fishing part of the river is certainly not more than five miles in length, a consideration of this, compared with the weight taken, will give some idea of the numbers it contains.



## CHAPTER I.

### AN EVENING AT BELLEEK.

Belleek — Mother Johnstone's — The Characters introduced — The Return from Fishing — The Dinner — St. Columba at Rose Isle — Legend of the Monk's Ford — Legend of the Cursed Throw — The Gauger of Kinloch — Drowning the Lily.

THERE is nothing very new in the comparison between the course of a river and the life of a man—the leaping, sparkling, rushing eccentricities of childhood, the calm majestic utilities of middle life, and the quiet imperceptible gliding of old age into the waters of eternity, are images familiar to every one: but the Erne, being an Irish river, seems perversely to have begun its life at the wrong end, starting with the quiet calmness of old age, and finishing off with the beauty and playfulness of childhood.

It leaves its parent lake a broad, calm, deep, brimming river, beautifully meandering among green and pleasant pastures, till, about half its course being completed, its

whole character is suddenly and entirely changed ; all is roar, and rush, and ripple, and sparkle, and the stream dashes away from pool to rapid, and from rapid to pool, till, in the town of Ballyshannon, it thunders over a dark black ledge of limestone rock, and is lost in the deep salt sea below.

Just at the point where this change takes place is situated the little village of Belleek, renowned in Cromwell's wars, and still protected by a small pentagonal star fort, which he built here to protect the passage of the river.

Belleek is neither cleaner, nor tidier, nor less ruinous than Irish villages in general, but it is much more pretty and picturesque than most of them. The roaring river, here compressed within a very narrow channel, is spanned by one of those pointed bridges which our ancestors were so fond of, beautiful to look at, but giving its passengers the full benefit of a supplementary and particularly steep artificial hill. Full in front are the falls of Rose Isle, and above them the pretty little rocky islet itself, with its half-dozen feathery ash-trees, and its ivy-covered fishing-lodge.









Time was when the evening merriment of the jolly fishermen had been heard from this lodge, far above the plashing of the rapid and the roar of the falls : but those times had long gone by, and the green slimy walls were cracked from the top to the bottom ; the clay floors were in holes ; the roof, like Ossian's apparitions, permitted the stars to shine through ; and the picturesque little building, having passed through the vicissitudes of a convent, a barrack, a fishing-lodge, and a police-station, now bade fair to become as picturesque a ruin.

The scene of action had been removed to what in England would have been called the village public-house, but which, in virtue of its being situated in Ireland, rejoiced in the style and title of " hotel."

And, in truth, the hotel was not without its pretensions either : true, its floors were but of mud, and its thatch not of the newest nor the most water-tight, but it was the only house in the whole village that could boast a storey above the ground-floor : and looking, as it did, full and confidently up the street, it bore, after all, a somewhat grand and imposing appearance.

It was at the close of a wild and stormy day in July, that two men were sitting over a bright turf fire in the upper room of this hostelry: the one a jolly, redfaced, bald-headed English squire; the other a well-dressed, not to say dandified, young fellow, with a pleasant and gentlemanlike, but withal somewhat vacant, expression of countenance.

They neither of them seemed the most appropriate figures for such an interior, but there could be no doubt what had brought them there, for one whole side of the great, rambling, low-roofed room was fitted up with brackets, and on these were ranged at their full length every variety of fishing-rod invented, from the great twenty-foot cart-whip-looking affair from Ellis Quay, to the light, elegant trout-rod from Bell Yard; while on a sort of side-table, hastily run up of unplanned deals, lay, "in wild confusion tost," reels, gaffs, baskets, pike-litches, fly-books, material-books, cross-lines, and otters, all the paraphernalia of fair and unfair fishing.

Across the room, and dividing it into two unequal parts, was stretched a dingy red-and-white checked curtain, which, as it waved to and fro in the currents of wind

that chased each other round the smoke-stained walls, disclosed short glimpses of two low curtainless beds ; one of which, owing to the inequality of the floor, was standing with one foot raised as in the act of advancing. A herald would have described it as a bedstead passant.

The light, which was failing fast, was admitted through three low latticed windows, so scientifically arranged as to secure a thorough draft of fresh air and plenty of it, blow the wind from which quarter it would ; and at this present moment the ed-dying and irregular blasts of a fierce south-wester were dashing the rain against them in intermitting torrents, just as if some one outside had been flourishing about the spout of a fire-engine.

The table had been for some time laid for dinner, and the younger man of the two, whom, for distinction's sake, we will call the Scholar, had already begun to evince as much impatience and fidgetiness as was consistent with his very good-humoured countenance, when the sudden tapping of the long rods against the outside of the window announced the arrival of those for whom they had been waiting ; and laughing,

chattering, stumbling up the dark staircase, and disencumbering themselves of their wet macintoshes, the Parson and the Captain entered the room.

“What on earth have you been doing all this time?” said the Squire: “you did not expect that any salmon, who had the least regard for his own health or respectability, would be out on such a day as this?”

“Not a wise one, certainly,” said the Parson, diving, as he spoke, under the curtain, to get at his dry clothes; “but Pat Gallagher says, philosophically, that there is always a fool to be met with everywhere—and we have met with a good many. Do you smell nothing yet? Anne and Sally are cooking salmon-steaks enough to provision a garrison.”

Indeed, the savoury smell of the broiling salmon had already begun to ooze through the ill-laid floor, the cracks in which were so wide, that one could almost reconnoitre from above the operations of the kitchen beneath. And, in a shorter time than could be conceived possible, the whole party, in their dry fishing-jackets and trousers, were seated round a table heaped with every variety of mountain luxury, of which the pink flakes







The Fisherman's Home.



and snow-white curd of the fresh-caught salmon formed by no means the least important ingredient.

Far too sharp-set were the fishermen to waste much time in talking during the progress of the meal—a stray joke, a brief reply, or a good-humoured nod, was all that passed between them; till at last they drew their chairs round the joyous turf fire that blazed cheerily on the hearth, glancing on the wet rods that hung in their brackets, and glittering in the rain drops which coursed each other down the panes of the windows.

“Well, Parson, how many tails have you turned?” said the Scholar, who, being new on the river, spoke carefully the most correct of fishing slang—more Attic than the Athenians.

“Two,” said the Parson; “the fine fourteen-pound salmon you have just eaten, and a good graul\* which I left at the fish-house: but after the squally weather came on, the Captain beat me out-and-out. I am but a fine-weather fisherman, after all; I cannot

\* *Graul*, called in the north a grilse and on the Shannon a peel; a salmon that has made but one sea voyage; known by his single row of teeth.

force out a line as he does. But what have you been about yourselves? It strikes me that I saw an empty larder as I passed through the kitchen just now."

"Not a tail—not a rise—and yet I was fishing in the most promising place of the whole river; a fine open pool, contracted towards the lower end by a ruined eel-weir, and breaking away into a thundering rapid. I cannot conceive how it was that I rose nothing. It is a most lovely place, too, for a sentimental poet or romancer, surrounded with rocks, and feathering trees, and hanging banks, with a beautiful smooth level sward of turf near the stream—just the very place for a water-nymph, 'shut out from the world and secluded from the gaze of man.' There is not a place from which you can see it except from the high rocks above the Captain's Throw."\*

"And I do believe," broke in the Parson, "that he has been toiling all the day at the

\* Salmon will rise only in particular depths of water, which must be neither too deep, nor too rapid, nor too slow, nor too shallow for them. These places are technically called "throws," and frequently bear the name of some eminent fisherman.

Enchanted Throw. Why, my honest and painstaking novice, you might have flogged from this till Doomsday without rising a fish there—the place is cursed. Have you never heard of St. Columba?”

“No,” said the Scholar; “what of him? and what has he to do with the fishing?”

“Why, for matter of that, St. Columba is the patron saint of the salmon, and many a good turn has he done them. For instance, at Rose Isle, where you lost that fine fish yesterday, instead of the two falls you see now, there once was but one step from the top to the bottom; and you may easily conceive that no fish that ever was spawned could take the leap. But the tender-hearted saint, grieving at their fruitless toil, and pitying their battered sides as they fell back into the whirling caldron below, prayed away a good piece of the rock, and gave them that easy comfortable staircase which you see this day. In good truth, St. Columba was a very worthy saint when his bristles were not up; but Irish saints are apt to be peppery, and I am sure Job himself could not be expected to stand the loss of his dinner. Still I must confess that the story I am going to

tell is not quite so much to the saint's credit as the last was.

“Hungry and tired was the worthy saint, as he came down that steep, rugged pathway, that leads from the Captain's Rock. Hard at work had he been all day, ‘preaching of sermons and singing of psalms,’ and many were the heathens he had converted, and many were the wild Irishmen that he had clipped of their wings. But lips, though holy, must still be fed; and as Cockburn's Hotel was not then established at Ballyshannon, the saint began to have serious misgivings about his dinner; when, to his joy, he saw, seated on the wing of that Danish eel-weir (where I saw you the other day, looking so like a Leprechaun),\* a jolly fisherman, and at his feet a goodly number of glittering salmon. ‘Bestow thine alms, stranger,’ said the saint; ‘bestow a salmon for the sake of Our Lady on a poor saint, who stands an excellent chance of going to bed supperless.’

“The man must have been a Presbyterian or a poor-law guardian, that is certain, for he told the holy man to go work for his

\* A particularly ugly male fairy who presides over hidden treasure.

livelihood. Could flesh and blood stand that? Work for his livelihood! when the saint had already baptized more heathens than the sinner had hairs on his head; and St. Columba an Irish saint, too! It would have been quite consistent with his country had he upped with his pilgrim-staff, and broken the man's heretical head; but St. Columba thought that this would be uncanonical. He was always a stickler for church discipline, so he pulled out his book and cursed him heartily instead: he cursed him by hanging and drowning, he cursed him by fire and water, and (which was somewhat superfluous) he cursed the throw for his sake; and having thus given him a cast of his clerical office, he passed on in holy meditation.

“The next man who came down that rocky path saw a terrible sight. The uncharitable fisherman, who had hooked his fly in a tree above his head, had climbed up to free it, and his foot slipping, his neckhandkerchief had performed the office of a hempen cravat; while, the fire he had lighted to broil his fish, having consumed the foot of the tree, the whole had bent forward into the stream, leaving the dead body bobbing up and down



in the current like a fisherman's float ; and in that throw, beautiful and tempting as it seems, and numerous as are the ignorant and unbelieving tyros who have wet their lines there, not one single salmon has risen from that time to this. There, what do you think of such a curse as that ? St. Columba was no fool of a saint, I can assure you."

"What must we think of such a religion as this," said the matter-of-fact Scholar, "whose very legends teach revenge, and whose holy deeds are murder ?"

Now the Scholar, who had come from the Black North, was a bitter Protestant, and hated holy water to a degree exceeded by one gentleman only, who shall be nameless ; he did not above half like the Parson's cut at the Presbyterians, and was savage accordingly.

"Steady, there—steady, my little Derry Prentice," said the Captain ; "the floor has cracks in it. Never mind revenge and murder just now. Besides, you're wrong ; the Church can bless as well as curse. St. Columba did get a dinner that day from Cassidy of Bundoran, and in recompense secured the entail of that fishery to him and his family for ever ; and you know that the man who gave us



leave to fish there is a Cassidy every inch of him, to this day ; and, moreover, the river there is in season eleven months in the year. Saints have gratitude !”

“ To be sure they have,” said the Squire. “ You know the Ford, Mister Scholar ? I am sure you ought to know it, for you were nearly immortalizing yourself the other day there, when you mistook the ridge, and slipped into the great hole below it with your water-boots on. Well, that very ridge was raised to accommodate a holy friar who came to bless the lands of Clogh-or ; weary was the holy man, but he pressed perseveringly on, and as he sank at the last stone dyke, he did all he could—he threw his mantle over the fence to take in one field more. He died, I believe ; but his memory lives, and the ford is called Ballagh na Monach, and the hill-side Corry na Monach, to this day.”

“ Nonsense !” said the Scholar.

“ True,” said the Captain ; “ and Pat Gallagher tells me that Clogh-or pays no tithe on account of this act of self-sacrifice, and the field where the mantle fell pays half-tithe, and has done so from the day of the

friar's death. What do you mean by nonsense?"

"Why, I mean, that there is no more truth in those papistical legends than there is in the Parson's fairy stories."

"Why, you don't mean to say," said the Captain, leaning forward in his chair, and looking him full in the face,—“you don't mean to say, here, on the banks of the Erne, the very head-quarters of fairyland, that you don't believe in fairy stories?"

"No, I don't," said the Scholar, doggedly.

"Then look out for the fate of the gauger of Kinloch, that is all."

"What was that?" said the Scholar, whose imagination had been running riot all the time on creviced floors and holy murders.

"Why, this was it. The gauger was coming home from a christening one night from Bundoran to Ballyshannon; it was late, —for, you know, in Ireland there is generally more whisky than water used in that ceremony; it was late, but he had come safely to the spot where the road crosses that sandy flat about two miles from Ballyshannon,

when he saw, in the Danish fort to the left, the soft, pale light of the burning white thorn, and heard the joyous sounds of elfin merriment.

“ ‘ I’d like to know whether your spirits have paid the duty,’ said the gauger, putting his head over the low, broken wall.

“ Whirr! bang! slap! thump! came the fairy clubs on the shoulders of the man and the ribs of the horse; and the next morning Dobbin was found at his own stable door at Ballyshannon with two broken knees and a cut head, and his master lay under a wall by the road-side half a mile off, in a state of insensibility, and covered with bruises from top to toe. It’s a true story, I do assure you, and the man’s still alive, and will swear to the truth of every word of it for a glass of whisky.”

“ Come, my worthy young friend,” said the Squire, as the Captain finished his story, and the Scholar looked at him with a ludicrous expression of disbelieving wonderment, “ I think it is high time to turn in now; the Parson has been yawning this half-hour. Come along; never mind the fairies, and don’t go dreaming of gaugers and clubs.”

“ And do not be afraid of an Irish Vehme gerichte,” said the Captain; “ at least not

here : the Parson has been humbugging you ; for Mother Johnstone, besides being the civillest woman, and the best cook in the three baronies, ‘ the best wife, the best Christian, and the best maker of cold rum-punch ’ (only she makes it hot, and with whisky) is, into the bargain, as thorough-going a Protestant as ever drowned a lily.”

“ Drowned a lily ? ” said the Squire, interrogatively.

“ Ay, drowned a lily,” said the Parson, quietly ; “ a religious ceremony in these parts.”

“ What the devil ! ” said the Squire ; “ this is the first I have heard of it.”

The Parson loved to get a rise out of his Orange and Protestant friend ; so, drawing himself up in his chair in the attitude of a professor delivering a lecture, he began, didactically :—

“ The country of Ireland is divided into two religions : that of the higher classes is Anythingarianism ; that of the lower, pure Popery. For further particulars on this subject see Swift, from whom I quote this passage. The principal difference between these two sects is, that the latter worship a multiplicity of saints (being only too glad of any pretext whatever for

keeping holiday and being idle), while the former, like the Mahometans, worship one only. This saint is William, King and Confessor. St. William was duly canonized by Act of Parliament, and in England has had half the fifth of November dedicated to him, but in Ireland the whole of the twelfth of July. On this latter day, his worshippers walk in solemn procession to the church, where the pulpit (which is the Anythingarian High Altar) is profusely decorated with lilies, the flower sacred to the saint in question. This flower is not white, like that dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, indicating her purity, but of a strong brimstone colour: what that indicates I do not know; it is, however, always regarded with high esteem and veneration. These lilies, duly consecrated by the sermon, which generally is a pretty strong one, are distributed to the worshippers, who immediately proceed to drown them. This part of the ceremony is, I believe, seldom or never performed in church; the bell of the flower is stripped from its stem, and is placed, stalk uppermost, in an empty tumbler, where it is immediately surrounded with lumps of white



sugar. It is then drowned, or covered with whisky, the national spirit, which, when the bells are large, generally fills about three-fourths of the tumbler; water is poured upon the top of this, particular care being taken by the celebrants that it be screeching hot. The whole then is solemnly drained to the very bottom, the leader first pronouncing a set form of words, which, like most religious mysteries, is totally unintelligible to the uninitiated.\* I cannot give you much information about the remaining part of the ceremonies, which, like those of Eleusis, are carried on throughout the whole of the night; but the next morning the *mystæ* are commonly found in as exhausted a state as ever

\* The Author has been furnished with a copy of the commemoration service of the great Anythingarian saint by a correspondent from the north of Ireland. It would be altogether foreign to the tolerant spirit which so happily characterises the nineteenth century were he to seem to condemn the religious observances of any denomination of Christians; moreover, he is not quite certain that he entirely understands one word of it. Nevertheless, he thinks it advisable to suppress certain parts, which a harshly-judging public might think blasphemous or indecent. The remainder is as follows:—

“ The glorious, pious, and immortal memory of the



was Pythoness of old. They are then generally carried to bed, and, indeed, are frequently some days before they entirely recover their senses."

The wrath of the Scholar had been gradually rising throughout the whole of this lecture, which the Parson delivered with the most absurd gravity; and there is no saying what might have been the upshot, had not the Squire good-humouredly pushed him down the stairs before him; while the Captain, who had just drawn back the curtain that concealed a far cleaner bed than the rest of the establishment would lead one to expect, shouted after him, "Good night, Scholar! sleep in peace. Keep a civil tongue in your head about Rome, and may St. William 'have you in his holy keeping!'"

great and good King William, who delivered us from Popery, slavery, brass money, wooden shoes, and warming-pans. May he who refuses to drink this be rammed, and damned, and double-damned, and crammed into the great gun of Athlone, and fired up into the elements, and blown to smithereens, to make sparrow-bills for Orangemen's shoes! May his soul be in the pope's belly, the pope in the devil's belly, the devil in hell, hell in flames, and the key in the Orangeman's pocket....and a fig for the Bishop of Cork."

## CHAPTER II.

### A DAY AT LOUGH MELVIN.

Effects of a Westerly Gale—Expedition to Lough Melvin—Irish Cars—The Johnstones—Otter Fishing—Cross-line Fishing—Precautions against Quarrelling—Not very Efficacious—The Bridge—The *Salmo ferox* a Peace-maker.

BETWEEN the ruins of Rose Isle and the main branch of the river there is a sort of esplanade—a natural pavement, as it were—divided here and there by fissures, into which some half-dozen hardy ash-trees had rooted themselves. Dipping as it does at a very small angle into the river, and worn almost as smooth as a real pavement by its winter floods, it forms not only a very pleasant quarter-deck walk, but also a pretty accurate gauge of the water in the river.

It was early on the following morning that the Parson, leaning on his gaff, was whistling

pensively, as he contemplated the unusual breadth of the limestone ledge and the shrunken aspect of the Rose Isle rapids beyond it.

The rough weather of the preceding evening had not terminated in rain, of which indeed no very great quantity had fallen, but had settled down into a steady hard westerly gale, which had raged with undiminished violence throughout the night, but since dawn had been gradually breaking, and had now nearly dropped to a dead calm.

Still, however, both in earth and sky, were traces to be seen of elemental war: racks of streamy cloud were still chasing each other through the sky, the esplanade on which he stood was strewn with the wet and still green leaves of the ash, while a line of sticks and other floating *débris*, like a high-water mark on the sea-shore, might be traced at some distance from the present channel of the rapid.

There is a curious peculiarity in the Erne: its floods depend more upon the quantity of wind than upon the quantity of rain. The whole length of the river between its parent lakes and the sea is but some seven or eight

miles, and neither the river nor the lake has any tributary of consequence. The whole supply, therefore, of the waters is derived from the upper lake, and passes through the narrow channels which insulate the town of Enniskillen.

Both lakes, lying nearly east and west, feel therefore the full sweep of a westerly gale, and thus it often happens, after a sharp breeze, that the waters, banked up as it were at the eastern end, produce a considerable flood at Enniskillen, while at the same time the depth of the river between Belleek and the sea will be diminished as much as a couple of feet.

A few hours' calm must, of course, bring everything to its level; but, in the mean time, the salmon, frightened and driven from their usual stations, roam about disconsolate, or throw themselves madly out of the water, but seldom or never take the fly.

It was to ascertain this that the Parson had sought the flags of Rose Isle, and was at that moment reluctantly schooling his mind to realise the evident fact, that his long rod might just as well hang in its brackets that day.

He turned musing and melancholy; and, crossing the one-arched bridge that spans the lesser stream, with both hands in his pockets, went slowly up the street of Belleek.

“Your Reverence will not be breaking the fifth \* commandment to-day, any how,” said Pat Gallagher, as the Parson entered the inn door: “sorrow a tail we’ll turn to-day.”

“Not on the river, Pat, certainly,” said the Parson: “you may cross the Ford dry-shod. But what do you think of a little murder on Lough Melvin?”

“By George,” said the Captain, from the stair top, “you have hit on the very thing! There has been a little rain, just enough to stain the water, and the breeze will have shaken the flies off the branches by bushels. Rouse out the Squire, and tell Bob Johnstone to have the cars ready. Look alive, Pat, and hand me down my brown fly-book!”

And in five minutes’ time all hands were assembled round the table, arranging the lake tackle. The bright and glittering flies of the Erne were unlooped from their

\* *Anglicè*, the sixth.



casting-lines, and discarded in favour of the dull and sober-coloured breed of the lakes. Tinsel, and golden pheasant, and blue jay, were laid aside, and in their place came the grey and quakerish mallard wing, with brown, or dark blue, or chocolate pig's-wool bodies, and an unpretending black or natural-red hackle over all.

Then came the tribe of lake trout flies—not new creations, like the salmon flies, which resembled nothing in heaven or earth, but monstrous growths of the natural fly. There was the well-known wall-fly, with its landrail wings, brown silk body, and red hackle. There was the Black Palmer, and the Marlow Buzz ; but all looking gigantic and unnatural, tied at least three sizes larger than their river brethren.

The salmon rods, as being too long and too unwieldy for boat work, were left at rest, and their reels were fixed on rods of a lighter and handier description. The Parson's reel-line, which, thoroughly soaked by the yesterday's rain, had been unwound and hung up to dry, had scarcely been gathered in, when, with clatter and jingle enough for ten carriages, and shouting enough for a dozen



men, Mr. Bob Johnstone and his aide-du-camp drove up their cars to the door.

“It is impossible,” said the Squire, looking out of the window, “that a vehicle like that could be the invention of a country three degrees removed from barbarism. You cannot talk, because you sit back to back : you cannot see, because you sit sideways : you cannot drive on account of the cramped attitude : you have the motion of the horse in addition to the jolting of the wheels : and from every chance meeting in the road your knees are in danger.”

“Cars are well enough,” said the Scholar ; “but as for these particular concerns, they are all to pieces already. We shall never get there.”

“Well, it must be confessed,” said the Captain, “Mr. Bob’s turn-out is not in the extreme of elegance. That off-wheel would be much the better for its proper complement of spokes. Rope traces may do at a pinch, but the prejudice certainly is in favour of leather. Yet for all that it will carry us to Lough Melvin, and that is where we want to go ; and I question whether the Scholar’s smart phaeton would do that, or

your chariot either. It is in keeping with the country.”

“I doubt,” said the Scholar, “whether it has ever known the taste of a pailful of water since it came from the cartmaker’s hands.”

“Well, that is in keeping with the country too; and so are Bob’s jacket and trousers. But, heavens and earth! what have we here? Look at the back panel with the crest upon it! look at the winged spur, the only clean place in the carriage! Bob has been rubbing up the crest to make us notice it.”

“To be sure,” said the Scholar: “is not he a Johnstone, and good reason to be proud of it?—as good a gentleman as the King, only not so rich.”

“Do you mean to spend this day in chattering, gentlemen, or are we to catch trout?” broke in the Parson, who had hitherto been patient enough, for his line had kinked into a tangle while drying, from which he had had some difficulty in disengaging it.

Bob’s winged spur might well have been the sign of his car, instead of the cognisance of his family, for, having received his freight, and no light one either—namely, the Squire,

the Scholar, two attendants, four rods, and a mysterious package which Paddy Mooshlan\* had carefully covered up in the well—he rattled off at a rate which, as the Squire afterwards declared, made his neck not worth ten minutes' purchase during the whole journey.

Whether it was real or imaginary, the danger was over in little more than an hour, when, the second car having come up, the whole party were again assembled on the shores of Lough Melvin, fitting their rods and arranging their tackle; the cars, with their drivers, having gone on to the little village of Garrison, at the head of the lake, for the double purpose of getting stabling for the horses and boats for the fishermen.

“I thought Paddy Mooshlan was after some mischief,” said the Captain, as the Squire, unfolding the mysterious package, exhibited that execration of all true sportsmen, an otter—or, as the attendants invariably pronounced the word, an “author.”

An otter is a thin piece of board, about four feet long and a foot or so broad, cut

\* This name is properly written Musgrave, but is invariably pronounced Mooshlan.

into the shape of a fore-and-aft midship section of a ship. This is leaded on the edge that represents the keel, so as to swim edgeways. The principle on which it acts is that of a river barge, where the towing-line is so adjusted, that the barge proceeds in a straight line through the water, though the line acts at an angle.

In the case of the otter, that part of the towing-line nearest the float, which is technically called the back-line, is made of three-fold barbers' silk, light, but very strong, to which, at intervals of three or four feet, are looped all manner of flies, to the number of from fifteen to thirty : to this is attached an ordinary salmon reel-line, which generally leads through the rings of a short, stiff rod.

When all is ready, the float is launched by an attendant, the fisherman, with the rod in his hand, either taking a boat or following the line of the coast, and giving line or reeling it up, as occasion requires. On account of the particular angle at which the line acts, the otter, on being pulled, slips out to sea, somewhat on the principle of a boy's kite, keeping nearly at right angles with the fisherman's course, and, con-

sequently, exhibiting all the flies to any fish that may be lying between it and him.

The line being fastened to the upper edge of the float-board, a strong pull from either fish or fisherman would lay it flat on the water; and thus the fisherman is always able to draw it towards him, though, as long as the draft is not too great to prevent it from swimming on its edge, its tendencies are slightly outward.

To balance and manage such a machine as this requires considerable ingenuity; but, for all that, it finds small favour with sportsmen, because it necessarily pricks and frightens ten times as many fish as it catches. There may be reasonable doubts whether it injures the breed of fish by the numbers it destroys, because, though it may succeed for a few days, it soon makes them so shy that they will look at nothing. It should never be used on known ground certainly, but it is extremely useful in reconnoitring a strange lake.

It was for this reason that the Captain, a perfect piscatorial martinet, was looking with such infinite disgust at the proceedings of the Squire and Scholar. These two were



busy arranging the heterogeneous mass of back-line and foot-link, while the Parson, who was much more tolerant, and now and then did a little poaching on his own account, was giving them the benefit of his experience, advising them to reserve the large flies for the deep water, and to loop the small ones on the in-shore end; suggesting the benefit of two or three swivels to prevent the back-line from curling up the foot-links, and many other little hints, which the Captain, though he fully understood the work, would have died a martyr rather than lend a hand to.

“Come,” said he, “here are two boats coming for us round that point; put up that thieving otter, and if you must poach, poach with the cross-lines. It is some comfort to think that the man who invented that rascally machine is now an inmate of the Dublin Lunatic Asylum.”

Why cross-lines find more favour in the eyes of sportsmen than the far more scientific otter, it is hard to say: they are infinitely more destructive and require very much less skill. In this case there is no float, but the back-line is attached to a reel-



line at each end, the reels being fixed to two short trolling-rods. These are managed by two fishermen, one at each rod, who are perfectly certain to quarrel furiously before the day is over. The cross-line method is certainly more killing, though it is still obnoxious to the same fault as the otter, that of pricking and shying the fish; but it requires two boats, or that one fisherman should sacrifice himself, by walking on the shore, with a pretty fair certainty of tumbling in while he is scrambling round the trees and bushes which grow on the banks.

The Squire, who was hardly active enough to succeed very well with the otter, yielded readily enough, and the line was unbent from the obnoxious machine, which was again consigned to Paddy Mooshlan's keeping, and two stout pike-rods were substituted for it.

"Now, Mr. Scholar," said the Squire, as he stepped into that which was destined to be the in-shore boat, "I am an old Hampshire cross-line fisher; and I will tell you a rule that we made there. Nothing that is said by either party, while managing the cross-lines, goes for anything after those

cross-lines are unbent; we have full liberty to d—n each other to our heart's content, and to give each other the lie to any amount, as long as the lines are joined: but it is to be all forgotten the moment they are separated."

"Yes," said the Parson, "that rule is indispensable for Hampshire, where they fish with one fly only on their cross-lines, so that every fish hooked is the joint property of both parties; and it is not a bad one here, where we fish with twenty: but I would recommend another precaution. Tie this swan's feather by a bit of barbers' silk to the centre of the back-line, and let each count as his own, and manage in his own way, the rises that take place on his own side of it."

"Well, that is not a bad hint," said the Squire; "and we will have it on: however, I spoke only in jest: the Scholar and I have been friends too long to quarrel about losing a fish or two."

The Parson smiled and said nothing, but quietly took his place in the bow of the in-shore boat, with a light twelve-foot trout-rod in his hand: his business was to whip

shoreward, into those places where, from the rocky and uneven nature of the bottom, the boat was unable to approach.

“Now then, shove off,” said the Scholar, as he took his place in the bow of the off-shore boat, followed by the Captain, who had been baiting a formidable litch\* with a good-sized par, and was trying its spinning qualities, as the boat, under the influence of a pair of paddles, took its place at the edge of the deep water.

The signal was given : the cross-line, extended between the two boats, fell lightly on the surface, while the boats, in parallel lines, swept the north-eastern shore of the lake.

There never was a better day for this kind of fishing ; without a ripple on the water the cross-lines are absolutely useless, and in a stiff breeze the hooks are perpetually catching one another, and entangling the whole concern : but at this particular time the wind had entirely sunk, while the waters were still agitated under the effects of last night's gale, and tinged, though very slightly,

\* Litch, from the Saxon, lych—a dead body. An arrangement of hooks and swivels calculated to give the appearance of life to a dead bait.

by the mountain streams, which had already felt the influence of the rain.

“ Stop the boat ! stop the boat ! I have got a fish already ; let me get in my line.”

“ Oh ! not such a little fellow as that ; it is only a jenkins ; let him trail till we get something better,” said the Squire. “ See, there is another on my side now.”

And the line still glided over the water, dragging the unfortunate little creatures after it.

“ That’s the splash of a three-pounder at the least ; and, by George, he has missed me ! Try that bit over again, Squire.”

“ How on earth,” said the Parson, “ can you go back with all that tackle trailing on the water ? *Vestigia nulla retrorsum*. Besides, look here ”—he had been lengthening his line during this speech, and now threw his flies across the rise. The trout rose again, but this time a quick eye and a ready hand were waiting upon him, and the sharp scrape of the reel announced a capture.

But the cross-lines did not always miss their fish. If they pricked their hundreds, at least they hooked their tens, and fish after fish was hauled in, now by the Squire,

now by the Scholar. Now and then there was a tangle among the flies; occasionally a lively fish twitched one of the unoccupied hooks into the Squire's fingers, as he was hand-playing him; once or twice a monster shook himself off before any one could get near him — (the largest fish always do get off); but, upon the whole, it was a successful cruise; and though no fish of any size had been taken, for the Scholar's three-pounder did not weigh quite a real pound, yet the baskets were nearly full by the time the boats had arrived at the Bridge.

The best catch had been made on the shoals, or, as they are called, the sunken islands. These places, which are numerous enough in Lough Melvin, are marked by piles of stones, as beacons, to prevent the market-boats from running on them. Whenever they arrived at one of these places, one of the party would take his stand on the heap, with a cross-line rod in his hand, as a pivot, while the boat circled round him.

But by far the surest ground was the Dreahagh nan Shian, or Fairies' Bridge. This is an extensive reef of detached rocks, with large patches of sand and gravel, and



here and there extensive beds of water-weed. It connects Grove Island with a remarkable point on the northern shore, and is about equidistant from either extremity of the lake.

This place had been reckoned upon as a sort of object by the fishermen; and here they expected to wind up the day brilliantly. But by the time they had arrived there, the swell on the lake had completely subsided, and the glassy surface betrayed the cheat. The Parson's light tackle had occasionally deceived an unwary young trout, but for the last half-hour the cross-lines had caught nothing; when suddenly a heavy plunge was made on the Squire's side, and a four-pound gillaroo showed his yellow side as he carried down the fly.

"Hurrah! that's my fish," said the Squire; "and that is the fish of the day. Leave your line slack; I can play my own fish. You may see he's on my side of the feather."

Hardly were the words out of his mouth, when the unmistakeable heavy curl of a real salmon bubbled up round another of the flies; but this time evidently on the Scholar's side of the feather.



There was one moment of suspense, for the salmon always takes time to think before he makes his run; but the tugging of the captive gillaroo soon made him sensible of his danger, and in an instant of time the lines were rushing and rattling out from both the reels.

“Give him the butt!” “Let him have line now!” “Holy Virgin! keep his head off the ground!” “Ah now! keep the point of your rod up, can’t ye!” Such were the contradictory orders and advice bellowed out, at one and the same time, to the perplexed and frightened Scholar, who did his very best to obey them all, but without any very clear idea of what he was wanted to effect. But the Squire was an old fisherman, and played the fish well. His was the in-shore boat; and as the object of the fish was to head for the deep water, and consequently to pull from him, he had the whole work in his own hands, with the full advantage of a tight line; while all his partner had to do was to keep the slack of the line out of his way, and to watch for a turn.

At last, frightened perhaps by the off-shore boat, which lay right in his course,

the salmon gave two or three startled springs, almost within reach of its paddles, and then, as they invariably do, headed sharp back upon his own course. The Scholar, excited, and unaccustomed to this style of fishing, had omitted to reel up the slack of his line as the fish headed towards him; and when he shot back so suddenly, everything came slack. The Squire had no longer any power over it, and the fish, restrained by neither line, returned through the whole labyrinth of flies that had been following him, rolling them up into an inextricable harl, and thus plunged into the midst of a mass of weeds, followed involuntarily by the unfortunate gillaroo.

“Ah, blessed saints! he’s gone!”

“Ah, holy Virgin! see to that now!”

“Well, never did I see such a tailoring trick since I was a fisherman! Confound your stupidity! this comes of fishing with a tinker, who does not know the butt from the point.”

“How on earth could I help it, I should like to know?”

“Why, what the devil made you leave your line slack?”

“It is all your fault!” screamed the

Scholar ; for this pleasant dialogue was carried on from boat to boat, with a hundred yards of water between the disputants. "You *would* be looking after that wretched little gillaroo, because it was your fish — as if you could not have backed your boat ! Any one with common sense might have seen what must happen."

"I should like to know, sir, what you mean by saying this to me?" bellowed out the Squire.

The matter was evidently fast approaching to the state of "coffee and pistols for two," when the Captain, who, all unmindful of the fray, had taken the opportunity of casting his trolling litch into a likely bay in the weeds, suddenly started up, his stiff pike-rod bending as if it had been a fly-rod, his reel rattling, and his line flying out.

"Get the boat's head round, Pat. Follow him. Give way like mad, for my line is nearly out !"

Away went the boat in chase ; but so strong and so determined was the fish's first rush, that it was some time before the Captain could recover his line. This fish was evidently, like the salmon, heading for the deep

water, and the Captain had no sort of objection that he should go there, when, casting his eye forward, he caught sight of a long line of weeds lying right across their course.

“Give way sharp with the starboard oar. Head the boat to the east. Now pull up abreast of the fish. Give way! give way!” And jumping forward to the bows of the boat, and at the same time shortening in his line, he brought the point of his rod within an inch of the water. The boat and the fish were now running in parallel lines, about ten yards from each other, the boat, if anything, leading, and the Captain, by keeping a powerful strain on his line, at right angles to the fish’s course, caused him gradually to deflect from it, and to describe the quadrant of a circle; and thus, though unable to head him, he guided him along the edge of the weeds, until they reached, together, their terminating point, and nothing but deep and open water lay before them.

“Now, let him run,” said the Captain, easing the strain from his line, which had been severely tried; “easy with your oars—we are all safe—let him go where he pleases.”

But the fish did not please to go much

farther, for the water suddenly shoaled, and feeling himself too near the surface he attempted to turn. But the manœuvre had been foreseen and anticipated; the boat was cleverly winded, and receded from the shoal, leaving the fish astern, while the Captain, preserving his advantage by a steady pull, kept him rolling about on the surface, till the Squire's boat, which had been following in his wake, shot by, and Paddy Mooshlan gaffed him as he passed.

“Hurrah! Well done! Cleverly done all hands!” as a sixteen-pounder black trout, for such he turned out to be, floundered into the Squire's boat. “Out with the whisky-flask, and a glass all round. Hold on by the boat-hook to the other boat, and bring us alongside, you confounded Johnny M'Gowan! Three cheers for the Captain! and one more for Paddy Mooshlan the best gaffer in Ireland!”

“Well, Squire,” said the Scholar, gazing ruefully at the wretched remains of his cross-line, some half-dozen flies fluttering from the top of his rod, “I suppose your Hampshire rule must hold good; the cross-lines are apart, you see.”



The Squire looked up, half laughing, half ashamed. "Well, well, I thought we had been wiser," said he; "but Job never tried his hand at the cross-lines."

"I tell you what," said the Parson, "if ever I am engaged to be married, I will try a day's cross-line fishing with my intended. If her temper stands that, it will stand anything on earth."

"All right," said the Captain; "and now let us land on Ennis na Shia. I consider that black trout to have been a sacrifice on the altar of friendship; and I vote that we eat our sacrifice roasted, after the manner of the ancients."

"And kindle the fires of the altar with that otter," said the Parson, kicking the offending piece of machinery as it lay at the bottom of the boat.

"I'll be hanged if you do!" said the Squire. "Quarrel who will at cross-lines, I shall never quarrel with my otter. Many a good day's fishing have I had with him, many a heavy basket have I carried home; and whatever has been done by the rod, I have always found my otter a silent, faithful, useful——"



“Poacher,” \* broke in the Captain.

“Well, poacher if you will, but none the worse for that. It is not always you can get a boat, and whipping from a lake shore is always fatiguing, and very seldom profitable.”

While this conversation was going on, the boats had passed the bridge, and were pulling across the deep water that separates Grove Island from Ennis na Shia.

“Come along,” said the Captain, leaping ashore, and driving the spike of his rod into the green turf; “now for repose and tobacco. We have done enough for fame—*cras ingens iterabimus æquor.*”

\* Cross-lines and otters are now legalised; but the fisherman must take out a license for them, which will cost him twenty shillings. It were far better to make them contraband altogether, for the injury they do to the fishing is incalculable. The fish, frequently pricked, become soon so shy as to refuse the fly altogether; and thus the otter-fisher destroys the fair fisherman's sport and his own at the same time.

## CHAPTER III.

### ENNIS NA SHIA.

Method of roasting Salmon — Description of the Lake — Its Fish — The *Salmo ferox*, or Black Trout — The White Trout — The Gillaroo, or Yellow Trout — The Red Trout, or Char — The Brown Trout — The Par, or Jenkin — The Perch — The Freshwater Herring — The several Haunts of these Fish — The Course of the Salmon through Lakes — Their Partiality for their own Rivers — Difficulty of making Lough Melvin a Fishing Station — The Miss — Friday — The Reason why it is distasteful to Fairies — Dinner on the Island — Legend of the Fairy Bridge.

ENNIS NA SHIA, or the Fairy's Island, is a beautiful little wild spot, not far from the centre of the lake, and commanding a very complete panorama of it. It is sufficiently rocky to be picturesque, and well fringed with that most beautiful of shrubs the sweet-scented myrica, or golden willow. Neither rocks nor shrubs stand so thick but that the

tired fisherman may find in it many little spots of dry mossy turf, soft as a down bed, and as inviting to repose.

It was on one of these openings that the party was assembled, the boats being safely moored in a little bay. Against one of the rocks the men had already kindled a fire of dry arbutus and myrica branches, of which Pat Gallagher and Paddy Mooshlan were bringing fresh bundles ; while Johnny M'Gowan, who had great skill in such matters, was preparing the black trout for roasting. It was already cut into fids of five or six inches in length, which were spread out on arbutus skewers, and fixed upright on square pieces of turf. These, when the fire had burnt into embers, were ranged around it, and occasionally turned, being continually sprinkled with salt and moistened with water.

In the mean time the fishermen were dispersed about the little glade, reclining in various attitudes of repose on the soft turf, and leisurely contemplating the beautiful scene.

Few people who travel in Ireland are fully aware of its beauties, for in good truth

they are not to be seen by travelling along the high road; they lie hid on the shores of the lakes and the banks of the rivers; they must be sought for on foot, or discovered by accident.

Lough Melvin is situated at the northern termination of the Slieve Ghie, or Mountains of the Wind, which give their name to the whole county of Sligo. Though inferior in beauty to Lough Gilly, at the southern boundary of the range, and perhaps also to some of the little wild mountain lakes which are concealed in its secluded valleys, it is still very beautiful; but as a fishing-station it exceeds them all. It is full of islands and sandy shoals, the edges of which are excellent breeding-grounds for every description of trout, to which the weeds (its only drawback in a fishing point of view) afford effectual shelter. The great charm of its fishing is the variety of its fish; — you never know what you are to catch next. There is the salmon, and its follower, the white trout, from the sea; there is the black trout, or *Salmo ferox*, which sometimes attains a larger size than the salmon itself. These fish, unless under four pounds in weight, are seldom

caught with a fly; they lie at the bottom, close by the edge of the weeds, and take the trolling-bait greedily enough when it comes across them: but as they generally lie in the deeps, it is not very often that the fisherman has the patience to search them out. They are the very ugliest of the trout species, with a lean, hungry appearance, always looking out of season, and by their long teeth and sharp projecting jaws seem to bear a strong affinity to the pike.

In complete contrast to this is the yellow trout, or gillaroo — as beautiful as the other is ugly; it is the very picture of what a trout ought to be — short, round, compact, small-headed, and weighing heavy for its size. It takes the fly well and readily, and is seldom caught in any other manner.

But the beauty of the lake is the red trout, or char, though it never grows to any size, and is so shy a fish, and so retiring in its habits, that it seldom furnishes sport of any kind to the fisherman. It frequents the deepest and stillest waters, and may be caught with a live minnow or loach on a small hook, and a line heavily leaded, if any one likes to fish in such a manner. The red



trout is, however, by far the best eating of all the lake breed.

The common trout is here known by the name of the brown trout, a name which is probably a corruption from burn or brook trout, though it must be confessed it does look brown when lying side by side with the yellow gillaroo or the crimson char.

Besides these there is of course the mysterious par, which frequents every salmon river and lake in the world, and which always has been a complete puzzle to naturalists, who have never been able satisfactorily to make out its connexion with the salmon. Its local name in these waters is jenkin.

There are plenty of perch for those who like to catch them; and, indeed, there seldom happens a day's cross-line fishing without a plentiful take of these beautiful little fish, from their rising at flies that were never meant for them.

One fish there is for which no bait has ever yet been discovered: it is called in the country the freshwater herring, and is probably closely allied to the gwinead, if, indeed, it is not a variety of that very identical fish.



It roams about the lake in large shoals, showing itself occasionally at the surface, and rising, or rather sporting, in a tumultuous manner, so as to deceive the young hand into the idea of a preternatural rise of trout ; but for all that it takes no more notice of the flies cast among them than it does of the straws and leaves that float on the surface. It is generally caught by a flue, set between the openings of the weeds, and occasionally by the sean, wherever there is a sandy bay to haul it in. It is very plentiful, and at particular seasons forms an article of consumption in the neighbourhood.

For the trout, the gillaroo, and the jenkins, the northern shore affords the best throws : the lake there is more clear of weeds, and the bottom more sandy. An experienced eye will easily detect the likely places by the appearance of the shore in any lake ; but the motions of the salmon and white trout are governed by laws of their own, the principle of which is not yet discovered. They have their regular roads through the lake, from which they seldom deviate, and so, no doubt, they have at sea ; and though these roads are just as well known and just as

clearly defined as the course of an Indiaman through the Atlantic Ocean, yet they are just as (apparently) capricious.

It has been said, that every salmon that passes safely through the perils of a sea-voyage returns, not only to its own river, but to the very brook in which it was first spawned, and that, too, by the very road by which its ancestors travelled to reach the sea. Much of this is, of course, mere conjecture, but there are many interesting experiments which make it probable.

No amount of general knowledge or piscatorial talent will determine what this road is through any lake. When found, it is found for ever, for year after year it is the same ; but no safe general rules can be given for finding it. It is by no means necessarily the shortest line between the outlets of the lakes and the mouths of their mountain tributaries. The fish, doubtless, have some reason for passing to the right of a particular rock or clump of weeds, rather than to the left, for nothing relating to instinct is attributable to caprice ; but what that reason is, is subject to no general laws that we know of.

The fisherman who comes to a strange lake had better, if he can, consult the frequenters of it. Local information is the best, if it is to be had ; but if that fail him, his best plan is this : let him judge, by the geological formation of the shores, where the line of deep water runs ; that is to say, what would be the bottom of the valley if there were no water in it : for the chances are that the fish will generally prefer this course, particularly as it must lead eventually to the mouth of the principal tributary river. But it by no means follows that the fish will rise throughout the whole of it, because they will not rise at all in water beyond a certain depth. If this course should be interrupted or compressed by islands, especially if the water shoals between these islands, or, better still, between a range of islands and the main land, here the fish will lie to rest.

The fisherman should try these places, in the first instance, with the cross-line or otter, looking out carefully for a rise. There is so much difference between the rise of a trout and of a salmon, that it is hardly possible for him to be deceived. Whenever he sees

one, he should take the bearings of the place accurately with his pocket-compass, and note it in his fly-book; for salmon seldom lie singly, and always rest in the same places. This, indeed, is the principal use of the otter; it sweeps a large surface of the lake at once, and exhibits a great variety of flies: but when the locality of the fish and the class of fly is once determined, no one who can procure a boat would use the otter by choice, unless he were a very young fisherman indeed.

Besides the regular run of the salmon, there are, in every lake frequented by them, a certain number of what are called lost fish, which may be found anywhere where trout rise, and whose solitary rises frequently deceive the explorer. The chance of hooking a salmon among the trout adds greatly to the liveliness of the fishing, even though such an event does not occur three times in the season; and for that reason every trout-fisher on a salmon lake should have stout tackle, plenty of reel-line, and, if he use cross-lines, should mix with his trout-flies a certain number of sober-coloured salmon-flies

with mallard wings, especially as, in a strong ripple, the large trout will prefer these to anything that can be offered to them.

In Lough Melvin, the outlet is at the western extremity, and from that the salmon-course lies along the southern shore, and close to it. It is interrupted, from time to time, by weeds; and some spots are more favourable than others: but salmon are to be caught all along the first four miles of it. The best part is opposite to the Grove Island, after which it crosses the lake in a north-eastern direction; and at the eastern end; though fish are to be found on both shores, that part where our party began will best repay the fisherman.

The Bridge is not a salmon throw, and that fish which had so nearly caused an explosion between the Scholar and the Squire was, in all probability, a "lost fish" in more senses of the word than one.

The Lough Melvin salmon are the ugliest of their race; they seem to be crossed with the black trout—long, narrow, and pike-like, they weigh for their length not two-thirds the weight of an Erne fish. It is remarkable, that though their river, the



Bundraos, falls into the same estuary as the Erne, and though the mouths of the two rivers are not three miles apart, yet it never happens that an Erne fish is seen in the Bundraos, and very seldom that a Bundraos fish is seen in the Erne. Now and then a stranger may find his way there, and the most inexperienced eye will detect him at once among hundreds ; but this will probably be a "lost fish."

There is, with all their ugliness, one property in the Bundraos fish which is very profitable to the owners of the weirs. Though they are at no time plentiful, yet they are in season for eleven months out of the twelve ; while the Erne fish are in season for scarcely more than three. This is said to be a peculiar blessing, conferred on the lake by St. Columba of the Churches, as a reward to the open hand and charitable heart of the then possessor of the fishery ; and certainly if the lake ever was blessed, it has not yet forfeited its blessing.

"Somewhat over ten dozen of fish, without counting these rascally perch," said the Scholar. "Not a bad catch, considering that we had set this down as a blank day."



“ I never set it down for a blank day,” said the Parson. “ I knew we had always this lake in reserve, and it is a very good thing to have this reserve to fall back upon. The best of rivers — and I am inclined to think that there are few rivers better than the Erne — but the very best of rivers will sometimes be out of order, and then these lakes come in for an odd day.”

“ I am inclined to think that there are few lakes better than this,” said the Captain. “ Verily, St. Columba is a powerful saint.”

“ Very few, take it altogether. There are better trout, and more of them, in the Mullingar lakes, and at Inchiquin, and in several other places, but not the variety. It increases the interest wonderfully, when you are never certain but that the next rise may be from a small whale.”

“ I do not question the power of the saint,” said the Squire; “ but I think that there are some earthly second causes which co-operate with his blessing.”

“ Yes,” replied the Parson; “ and the principal of these is inaccessibility of the place. Naturally, this lake is in no way superior to Lough Gilly; give it a county

town at one end as big as Sligo, and a large trading village at the other, like Dromahaire, and it would soon lose its character as a fishing lake."

"I suspect that half-a-dozen days of the Squire's cross-lines would be followed by a sensible difference in the weight of our baskets," said the Captain.

"That is the secret," said the Parson. "No party can make it a regular fishing-station so as to scare the fish, or accustom them to the sight of flies; few are hardy enough to brave the discomforts of Garrison, though the inn there — I speak from experience — is infinitely better than it looks; and Kinloch, at the western end, though most beautiful to look at, is much worse off for accommodation."

"Why not fish it from Belleek?" said the Scholar.

"First, there is the superior attraction of the Erne," said the Captain; "no one would fish a lake when he could fish a river. But, under any circumstances, it would never answer to sleep five miles from your fishing, especially in this changeable climate, with cars to order, and boats to look after,

and no possibility of examining the state of the water, till you have fairly engaged yourself for the day."

"I once had thoughts of fishing it from Bundoran," added he, after a pause. "Bundoran lies much nearer to it than Belleek; not above two miles from its western end, and not half-a-mile from the Bundraos: but I was fairly disgusted with the place."

"Why, they call it the Irish Brighton," said the Parson.

"Well, it is very like Brighton in some things," said the Captain; "its dust, its wind, the bareness of its country, and its dearness. I do not know anything else in which it rivals Brighton; and in its dirt and discomfort it is unrivalled."

During this conversation, the Squire, who was little interested in the merits of Irish watering-places, was casting his eyes along the mountain side which formed the southern boundary of the lake. Like most Squires, he was addicted to the vice of farming; walked about, when at home, with a spud in his hand; and every year of his life buried some hundreds beneath the soil of his paternal acres. There was nothing very picturesque

in the mountain, for the northern slope of the Slieve Ghie is tame and monotonous ; but to the eye of the farmer it had its charms, for the soil was mostly good, the ascent very gradual, and the cultivation reaching nearly to the top. It was laid out mostly in potatoes, and cultivated on what is called the lazy-bed system, which, at a distance, would lead one to suppose the ground was trenched for asparagus.

The Squire took out his pocket telescope, and surveyed the ground again, as if there was something about it that he could not quite make out.

“ What on earth do those brown patches mean ? ” said he. “ Why do those lines of potatoes stop suddenly in so many places, though the lazy-beds are carried on ? ”

“ It is the miss, your honour,” said Pat.

“ The what ? ” said the Squire.

“ The miss,” said the Parson ; “ and a most unaccountable thing it is : it has appeared only within these few last years, and has ruined many a man. The potatoes do not come up weakly, nor do they die off, — they do not come up at all, while the very next bed may be a picture of health and pro-

ductiveness ; and it is not here and there a plant, but in patches, and always capriciously : in one case, every potato that a man has planted up to a certain night, will come up and thrive ; while of the next day's work not one will even show its head above ground — with his neighbour it may be exactly the reverse."

" And what cause is assigned for it ?" said the Captain.

" None whatever, I believe, by any one who knows anything about it. The people here, of course, attribute it to the fairies ; and it is certainly very like one of their mischievous pranks. I think it is peculiar to this district, and certainly the fairies have more power on the banks of the Erne than they have anywhere else. At any rate it is fully believed by the people. Many a man here begins his work on a Friday morning early, and muddles it through, so as to finish planting on that day, under the firm impression that on that day fairy maledictions, as well as fairy gifts, lose their power. Many, on the other hand, have avoided Friday, by way of escaping the displeasure of the fairies ; but hitherto both courses have been attended



with very unsatisfactory results. The miss still takes place, ruining one, and letting off another; but nobody can satisfy themselves thoroughly that the Friday has anything to do with it."

"What have the fairies to do with Friday?" asked the Squire; "in one way or other, that day seems to be worked up with much of their history."

"Why, they have nothing to do with it," said the Parson; "and that is the cause of all their woe and all their mischief. There is a tradition respecting the fairy tribes so universal, that it would really seem as if it had some foundation to rest upon. It belongs not only to the Irish fairy and her sister in the Highlands of Scotland, but to the Cornish Pixie, and the German Undine and Gnome, and the Scandinavian Nyssen and his brethren; and, what is more singular, to the Persian Peri also. In the war in heaven, at the rebellion of the angels, it is said that the particular circle of angels which belonged to our earth stood neuter, and, consequently, at the final victory, they had neither earned the blessedness of the victorious host, nor did they partake in the



condemnation of the vanquished. To earth they had chosen to belong, and to the destinies of earth they were consigned. They are not subject to death like man, but they are not immortal. Their life is limited to the duration of their abode. The hills, the plains, the woods, the springs, the waves, and the breezes, all have their inhabitants. Some of these localities perish even while the earth exists, and their fairies perish with them; but all must be destroyed at the great final crash of the world, and then, when man rises into life, the fairy sinks into annihilation.

“ From the blessings of Friday, therefore, the day of redemption, the fairy is excluded, and the consciousness of this operates, in one way or other, on the minds of them all. Most of them indulge in malicious, some in vindictive feelings, against the favoured race of man, whom they consider their inferiors, but whose privileges, nevertheless, they envy. The fairies of the Erne are of a milder and better nature. They exhibit no envious feelings whatever; but on Fridays they retire into their subterraneous halls, and pass the day in weeping and bemoaning their fate.

In few cases they do mischief intentionally, except in defence of their privileges or their property, in none maliciously ; but since on that day the upper air is deprived of their presence and influence, on that day their gifts and their curses alike must lose their power."

"Indeed!" said the Squire. "Well, that is a curious piece of history, and, no doubt, just as true as any history whatever, and much more entertaining. Are the Peris' feelings affected on Friday, too?"

"Really," said the Parson, "I cannot say that I have any very extensive acquaintance with the Eastern branches ; with the Irish fairies I am quite on familiar terms, and I am well acquainted, also, with some of the best Devonshire and Cornish families. I have even had the honour of an introduction to the great Nyssen of Norway, and to his sister, the Lady of the Lake. But it so happens that I have never met with a Peri in all my travels, and I am, therefore, unable to tell you whether they embraced the religion of Mahomet, along with their earthly compatriots, or whether they are Parsees, Manichæans, or Gnostics."

“I should think they were not Mahometans,” said the Captain, “if the poet Moore really had any acquaintance with them.”

“I doubt his ever having paid them a visit,” said the Parson; “but he must have been acquainted with some of the family. I am afraid, though, that most of his friends, whether of earth or air, had no very definite notions of dogmatic theology.”

A summons to the feast interrupted this conversation. The black trout was dished on the identical turf on which it had been roasted, each piece perched on its own particular skewers; and every fisherman having his own dish containing his own portion. But, besides this, a frying-pan had been discovered in the boat, that useful piece of campaigning furniture having been filched from Mrs. Johnstone that morning, by the provident care of Johnny M’Gowan. In consequence of this piece of foresight, for which he received due commendation, a large heap of well-broiled gillaroos decorated the centre; while a smaller pile of perch, which had been buried in the ashes, and were now served up in their scales, formed the bottom dish.

Bread there was none. No one thinks of bread when he may have the honest Irish potato, roasted in its skin, and laughing in its mealiness; but butter, pepper, salt, and other condiments, had been provided. The Scholar was even proceeding to squeeze a lemon over his share of roasted fish, when the Parson snatched it from his hand, and sternly bade him remember the whisky-punch.

Nor was there anything to disturb the serenity of the hour, in the consciousness of duties neglected—for it was no longer possible to deceive the very youngest and most unwary of the genus *Salmo*. The lake was as smooth as glass, with every tree on Grove Island and every rock on the Bridge accurately reflected, and looking like a real glimpse of that fairy-land, with the inhabitants of which the Parson had just been boasting his acquaintance.

“Upon my word,” said the Scholar, “it looks by this light as if one could go over that bridge in real earnest.”

“That journey was attempted once,” said the Parson, “but few of those who tried it lived to tell the tale.”

“What! in real earnest?” said the Squire.

“In real fairy earnest,” said the Parson.

“It was in days long past, when the whole of Fermanagh and the northern part of Sligo was possessed by the Maguires, that a strong castle stood on that rising ground in the middle of the bog opposite to us, on the northern shore. The castle was called Annagh Buie, which, however grand it may sound in Celtic, signifies, in plain English, nothing more than the Yellow Bog. But bogs in those days had other value besides that of furnishing fuel. They added, more than any other natural feature, to the strength of the houses, because it was impossible to bring any great number of men against them for want of standing room. The castle of Annagh Buie was deemed impregnable, and had for years effectually restrained the power of the O'Rourkes, who possessed the country about Lough Gilly, whenever the Maguires happened to be at war with them. This, as there was no particular cause of dispute, did not occur oftener than three or four times a-year at the most. The Maguire of Annagh Buie, though a chief or petty king in his own



right, was not the head of his name ; he owed a sort of feudal allegiance to the lord of Enniskillen, and paid it scrupulously, whenever he could not help doing so.

“ At the time we are speaking of, he had an only daughter and heiress. She was, like all heroines of romance, of beauty far too great for my description ; but it was not on that account that her hand was sought by the fierce O'Rourke of Lough Gilly, or by the powerful Maguire, lord of Enniskillen. Each was desirous of extending his dominion—each was alike covetous of the impregnable castle of Annagh Buie, and, for the sake of that, were content to put up with the heiress as the only practicable means of acquiring it.

“ Had there been but one of these suitors, or had either of them been content to yield to the claims of the other, or had they not been so equal in the number of their followers and the strength of their fastnesses, the fate of the poor girl would soon have been decided : but the lord of Annagh Buie was a politician ; he understood the balance of power, and saw clearly the advantage of being himself the pivot on which to balance



these powerful neighbours. Both were received courteously—both were admitted into the castle to pay their addresses to the fair Bragelah; but at the same time extreme care was taken, not only that their respective retinues should be evenly balanced, but that both together, should they by any accident come to a good understanding with one another, should not have a chance of overpowering the garrison.

“Things were in this state, when, one summer evening, a young harper made his appearance at the castle gate, and was readily admitted; as, when no war or other pastime was going on, the sources of amusement open to this great lord were very limited indeed.

“Who that harper was, or to what tribe he belonged, no one could say; even the old seneschal was puzzled; and, as he himself preserved an impenetrable silence on the subject, the laws of hospitality would not suffer him to be too closely questioned.

“He was fair and light-haired, and had not the bearing of either a Maguire or an O'Rourke; and yet no one could consider him exactly as a stranger, so well was he

acquainted with every locality and every circumstance of the neighbourhood. Every one, too, had some confused idea of having seen him at some period or other of their lives, but no one could say exactly where or when; and the name which he gave—Slievan—which signifies merely a mountaineer, gave no clue to the curious, as it might apply equally well to any individual of the mountain tribes.

“People, however, soon ceased wondering, and Slievan, popular from the first, soon became indispensable in the castle, and was permitted to remain on his own terms, delighting the ears of the rivals with his unearthly melodies, and taming down even the hard, scheming, political soul of the lord of Annagh Buie.

“In process of time he was requested to teach the mysteries of his art to the fair Bragelah, the young lady of the castle. What these three old ignorant statesmen could have been thinking about, or how they could be so ignorant of human nature as to place a fair-haired youth of lightsome temper, gay conversation, and wonderful skill on the harp, in such close communion

with a young lady, who was expected to be thankful for a bearded old ruffian, old enough to be her father, I cannot tell; but the event was, that, some treaty of statesman-like accommodation having been proposed and accepted by the two potentates, one article of which was the disposal of the fair Bragelah to one or other of them, the lady disappeared, and — curious coincidence — the harper disappeared also.

“ Hot and immediate was the pursuit. The O'Rourke summoned his horsemen from Kinloch to guard the western passes; the lord of Enniskillen barred the whole east; to the north flowed the then bridgeless and impassable Erne; while to the south lay the waters of Lough Melvin. It was impossible that they could have escaped beyond the guarded ring; within it the Yellow Bog furnished the only hiding-place, and Macguire's men were all well accustomed to its dangers. For a whole day the search was ineffectual, though a hundred pair of eyes were on the look-out; and the Macguires on the one side and the O'Rourkes on the other, searching every inch of ground before them, were gradually narrowing the circle; when,

just as the sun's lower limb touched the horizon, shout after shout re-echoed through the bog. The Enniskilleners closed in ; the O'Rourkes pressed their horses to the very edge of the soft ground ; while louder and louder rung the shouts of the men of Annagh Buie ; and the old chief himself dashed into the golden willows, as he caught sight of the fugitives emerging on that long projecting tongue of land just opposite to us, which is, as you see, so nearly isolated, that at this distance it looks like an island.

“ ‘We have them now!’ he shouted. ‘Close in ! close in ! it is impossible they can escape us now.’

“ But the sun had now sunk and twilight had already begun, and the time of fairy power had commenced. From the end of that point of land, and terminating at Grove Island opposite, there arose a soft blue mist from the lake, which, as it opened, disclosed a magnificent bridge of white marble, supported on a hundred arches, and lighted by a thousand pale flames, which, only that they were stationary, resembled those with which the wandering will-o'-the-wisp beguiles unwary travellers.

The fugitives had already gained the bridge.

“Follow!” cried the fierce O’Rourke.

“Follow!” cried the lord of Enniskillen.

And pell-mell, horse and foot, Macguires and O’Rourkes commingled, they rushed on the bridge, shouting, cursing, impeding each other by their very eagerness.

Already they had reached the crown of the bridge, when the harper, Slievan, turned, deliberately facing the rushing crowds, and slowly casting off his saffron-coloured, hooded cloak.

All stood aghast,—for his glittering coronet of snow, and his russet robe trimmed with purple, revealed the king of the mountain fairies.

The glamourie was at an end. Slowly, but inevitably, the bridge crumbled away from beneath their feet; buttress after buttress and arch after arch melted away in thin mist; nothing remained but here and there a patch of weed or a wave-worn rock, with the fairy lights dancing round it, while a broad trembling line of moonbeams dancing in the water marked the path of the bridge; and all the time the fairy lights gleamed,



and flickered, and danced over horses and horsemen, as they sank into the cold waters of the lake.

On the pinnacle of an isolated rock, Bragelah, supported by her fairy lover, trusting still, yet trembling and terror-stricken, was waving an adieu to the castle of Annagh Buie and its baffled lord.

Slowly the mist closed round them, and the fairy harps struck up a march of elfin triumph as the light evening breeze wafted them away to the blue and distant summit of Benbulbin.



## CHAPTER IV.

### A DAY UP THE RIVER.

Belleek Fair—Much Ado about Nothing—Effects of a Scalding Sun—Trout Fishing extraordinary—An equally Extraordinary Suit in Chancery.

IT was late on the following morning before the fishermen were astir,—late, that is to say, for men of their active and early habits, though it was not yet eight o'clock.

Although the sun had not been more than three hours above the horizon, the heat was already intense, though every means in their limited power had been called into play to moderate it. The long curtain, which concealed the beds from the sitting division of the apartment, was brailed up, and all the windows were propped open with sticks, so as not to lose the lightest breath of air. From one of these projected the head and shoulders of the Parson.

The body belonging to that head and shoulders was comfortably disposed at full length upon the rude platform of deals, which served at once for a cover to the stairs, which came up inside the room, a receptacle for innumerable miscellaneous articles of stray fishing-tackle, a sideboard, and, as in the present case, a sofa or lounging-place.

The Parson was listlessly watching the preparations for Belleek fair, if indeed watching be not a strong word to signify an act of utter laziness, with which the mind has but little to do ; and, indeed, his half-shut eyes did not evince any very great interest in what was going on around him, though the preparations were made on a somewhat extensive scale.

Belleek, though but a small place, and not bearing in any very great degree the outward visible signs of commercial prosperity, exhibiting as it does as fair a share of ruinous buildings as any village in Ireland, is, notwithstanding, a place of some note. It is a sort of lake seaport. It carries on a languid trade with Enniskillen, Pettigoe, and the villages of the upper lake, exporting

eels, dilske, and other maritime productions, and receiving in exchange from the interior, raw flax, corn, and occasionally cattle. Above the falls of Rose Isle there is a very small port, or dock, which is seldom without a boat or two. On this day it was already crowded, as, one by one, the trading people dropped in from the head of the lake, and, fastening their boats to the little quay, or pier, brought ashore their different articles of traffic.

There was as yet no very great crowd, but all along the street, on both sides of the inn, there were parties of men with crowbars and hurdles, marking out places for the cattle-pens; one or two standings were already erected, on which the owners were displaying coarse cheap calicos, and gown-pieces with great staring patterns, in which red and yellow predominated to a very great degree; another was unfolding the homespun woollens, grey or dark blue, of which the peasants fabricate their peculiarly ugly coats; then came the staple commodity of the place, the home manufacture of Belleek, the salted eel; below this again were two or three women from Bundoran, wrangling for precedence with regard to an eligible spot for the

sale of dilske. It is a very curious phenomenon in human nature, that the invariable effect of dealing in salt-water productions acidulates the temper and sharpens the voice ; but so it is in all nations, and so it was in the present instance. These ladies' voices were unquestionably the loudest, the angriest, and the most piercing in the street. And a no less curious phenomenon it is, that the horse, who is, as has been justly observed of him, a very honest animal, should, nevertheless, possess the peculiar property of making rogues of all who have any thing to do with him. And thus the slangish looks, cunning eye, and knowing demeanour of the men who were tethering long lines of stubby ponies and rough-coated horses to the strong ropes, picketed along the street, would lead one to suppose that, in that particular at least, there was no very material difference between Belleek and Tattersall's.

The Captain, who was a popular character, had been lounging up and down the street smoking his morning cigar, and cracking his jokes with a race of people who are by no means slow to appreciate a bit of fun, and to return it in kind. It was, however, with an

eye to business that he was watching the unloading of some dusty and travel-soiled ponies from the westward, laden with Connamara woollens. If there is one article of dress more peculiarly adapted to the fisherman than another, it is the soft, loose, elastic Connamara stocking, guiltless of the loom, knitted by the peasantry, and redolent of turf smoke. In this article the whole party of fishermen invested their capital to a large amount; for, as the Captain afterwards remarked, it was quite a pleasure to be wet through in them.

The most animated figure on the scene was the Scholar. Thoroughly disgusted at the apathy and laziness of his companions, he had gone down, rod in hand, to try what is called the Flag Throw. This is the rapid that divides Rose Isle from the left bank. It is fished from the flat slab of rock mentioned in the last chapter, and is very much the pleasantest and easiest fishing, besides being the least influenced by weather, of any throw in the river.

Across the head of it is a ford, affording the means of reaching the right bank. The ford is formed by a solid, flat, gritty slab of



rock, which at all seasons gives a firm and safe footing, notwithstanding the rush of waters. Over the edge of this the water tumbles in a low fall, not more than a foot or two in depth, and then races away in a rough flashing rapid, broken by rocks and stones for thirty or forty yards, and then thunders over the first falls.

No one unacquainted with the river would imagine this to be a throw at all, for the water has every appearance of being much too broken and rapid for the fish to rest in. But the numerous stones, which, though seldom showing their heads above water, contribute in a very great degree to cause the turmoil, afford secure resting-places, and during the whole season there is generally a salmon lying in the wake of every one of them. This broken water renders the throw entirely independent of sun and wind, and fish are frequently hooked there on days when there is not a rise in any other part of the river.

If, however, fish are easy to be hooked there, they are proportionately difficult to be landed, and that from the same cause. Every rock becomes a fortress, behind which the



fish entrenches himself whenever the slightest remissness on the part of the captor, or the slightest slackening of the line, affords him an opportunity; and not unfrequently will he throw himself down the very fall,—an act which, though it may be met by great quickness on the part of a fisherman, and turned to his advantage, generally does bring the tackle across the edge of the rock, and finishes the drama by cutting the line.

Suddenly there was a stir among the fair people. Men began to look up from their work, the hammering ceased, the plunging of the crowbars was heard no more,—there was a lull in the talking, and the battle of the marine ladies came to a premature close. Then came a rush to the wicket-gate of Rose Isle, and a crowding across its narrow bridge; carts were left half unloaded, newly-erected stalls were overturned; a sort of stampedo took place among the picketed horses, frightened as they were by the running and shouting of the people,—one or two of them broke away, totally disregarded by their masters, and added to the confusion by galloping down the street.

“By George! he has got a fish after all,”

said the Parson, starting up from his recumbent position, and seizing his gaff as he rushed down stairs. "Hang the fellow! what luck he has! Who would have thought it possible on such a day as this?"

The Parson, no doubt, was a little jealous; but that did not diminish the alacrity with which he crossed the street, pushed his way among the people, and emerged from the crowd on the flag-rock.

There, sure enough, was the Scholar, with his rod bending and his line running out. "Who is right about the day, now?" said he, triumphantly, as the Parson came up; "who knows most about fishing, now? Confound the fish! there he goes for the fall again!"

"Follow him," said the Parson, "and let him go down — the Captain killed one that way admirably last Monday. That's right! get on the high ground — hold your rod upright, and keep your line out of the water."

"There! he heads up stream again!" said the Scholar, as he raised his rod to the required position, and the line seemed to cut along over the surface of the water.

"Hurrah!" said the crowd. "Oh! that's

illegant now!—wheel him up, your honour!—wheel him up!”—and the Scholar, shortening his line, stepped back to his old position on the bank of the river.

Another rush of the line towards the fall: again the Scholar sprang on the high ground and raised his rod ready for the leap; and again the fish returned on his course, amid the cheers of the crowd.

A third time the Scholar stepped down with shortened line, and, depressing the point of his rod, prepared to draw the exhausted fish across the current into the shallower water at his feet, when, a third time, he rushed down again, to all appearance as fresh and vigorous as ever, and was again turned by the same manœuvre.

“There is something not quite right here,” said the Parson; “no fish ever played the same tricks over and over again with such regularity. Don’t come down this time, but keep your rod up, and tighten your line where you stand.”

Up it came, flashing from the water, as if the fish were making a sudden and furious sheer up the stream, and then at once became tight, fixed, and stationary.

“ By all that’s unlucky, I’ve lost him!— I’ve lost him behind that rock. Down with you there, Jemmy — down there, some of you! — throw stones in! — start him again!” And a shower of stones, cast by some twenty willing hands, came down like a hail-storm; but the line remained fixed as ever.

“ I’ll tell you what,” said the Parson, “you never had a fish at all; you have been hooked on that rock from the first.”

And so it was. In the very midst of the rapid his hook had got foul of a well-known rock, which has been from time immemorial the preservation of many a salmon. Feeling the sudden check, the Scholar had struck scientifically, and given the butt after the most approved fashion, when the water, catching the bight of the line, of which there was a good deal more out than there was any necessity for, ran out the reel, giving it every appearance of a fish heading determinedly to the falls. Whenever the Scholar got on the high ground and raised his rod, the action of the water was taken off from a great part of his line; and, as it appeared above the surface, it seemed like a fish running up stream. As a matter of course, the

fisherman followed what he imagined to be the fish, and attempted to draw him across the stream to his own bank ; but in so doing he necessarily lowered the point of his rod, and thus exposed a greater quantity of line to the action of the current ; and the strain thus increased was sufficient again to run out the reel, and the same results followed. He might have gone on thus working in a circle for the whole day.

Considering their disappointment, the crowd were exceedingly well behaved--nineteenths of them, indeed, did not the least in the world understand the merits of the case ; but, thinking that a fish had been *bonâ fide* hooked and lost, condoled with the beaten fisherman in all sincerity ; while the few who knew better, contented themselves with a few sly jokes or a knowing wink or two, as the poor Scholar, redder far with shame than from his recent exertions, gave the rod into Jemmy's hand, and "sought the friendly shelter of the inn."

"Come, come," said the Parson, "never mind it ; sit down to breakfast with a quiet mind, and pour me out a cup of coffee. You need not look so ashamed of yourself, many



an older fisherman than you has been taken in that way."

"That is true," said the Captain, cracking his first egg, "and the Parson may quote himself as an example. It was only last Monday that I saw him playing a jenkins in that very place, and shouting and bawling for Pat Gallagher and his gaff, loud enough to waken the seven sleepers; and the fish, when he did get it, turned out to be not quite twice the size of his fly."

"Fact," said the Parson, laughing; "and, for a wonder, no exaggeration. I hooked the little brute on the very edge of the fall, and it threw itself over. My line was too long for me to see what was the matter, and the falling water on the suspended fish gave it all the weight of a salmon. I never was so disgusted in my life; but I did not choose a fair day for my exhibition."

"Neither did I," said the Squire; "but I remember making a very similar exhibition myself. It was at Leckford, and before three or four members of the club, as good fishermen as any in England; all of whom were as much deceived as I was myself. There was a trout of some unheard-of



weight, that had taken up its abode under one of the bridges, and I was supposed to be the knight for whom the adventure of catching it was reserved. Well, sure enough, I hooked it at the first cast; but before I could get command of my line, the fish had run me under the bridge and defied every effort to get him out. I suppose I might have been a quarter of an hour playing him, with ten or a dozen fishermen and water-keepers standing round me and offering every conceivable piece of advice, when it occurred to some of them to send a man under the bridge; he succeeded in unhooking me from a great weedy post; and till then there was not a man of them all who had the smallest idea that the fish was off."

"Well, I cannot say but that it was some time before I had any suspicion of the nature of the Scholar's capture this morning, though I never did expect to see a salmon caught on such a day as this."

"What made you all so positive about the day?" said the Scholar; "you are always finding out some excellent reason why fish will not rise. Now it's the water, and then

it's the air ; and another time it's the sun.— The other day, Paddy Mooshlan drawled out, ‘ Sure it was Friday—my honour would not have the poor fish break their fast.’”

“ Well, I will not answer for the Friday's fast,” said the Captain ; “ but the fact is, that, compared with the moderate days, or even the bad days of our calendar, the number of real good fishing days is small indeed.”

“ That is the reason why one gets so disgusted with the fishing-books,” said the Squire : “ it is easy to catch fish on paper, and they generously give you magnificent days' sport, which, when you come to put them into practice, turn out nothing better than a Barmecide's feast.”

“ And yet,” said the Parson, “ they tell you the truth. There are few of us who may not recollect one such day in the season, or at least one such day in our lives. The fault lies with ourselves ; we read of what was done once, and expect to do it every day.”

“ It is a deceit, no less,” said the Captain ; “ if a book professes to give you directions for everyday practice, and describes what

cannot happen to you on more than three days in your life, I say that book deceives, though it tells the truth: but I do not think any book would have described its heroes catching fish on such a day as this."

"What is the matter with the day?" said the Scholar. "I see nothing wrong with the day, except that it is hot."

"Well, the heat is unusual," said the Captain, "and no unusual state of the atmosphere is favourable to fishing. But look here," he continued, rising, and drawing the Scholar to the open window, which commanded several reaches of the smooth still river above the falls; "look at that glare of sunshine; a bright sun, you know, is never very favourable to fishermen, though salmon will rise in it sometimes: but do you see nothing very unusual in that glare?"

"Yes," said the Scholar, "over the whole face of the country there is a white, sickly cast, with a haze of mist about it."

"Exactly so," said the Captain; "and that haze is a yellowish white, and not blue. And look at the sun's reflexion in the water; it seems larger than common, and blurred and indistinct: it is so dazzling, besides,

that, even at this distance, you can hardly look at it. That is what is called here a scalding sun : I have known the trout disregard it, and I think it is very possible we may do something with them in the evening : but not so the salmon ; he never does, or so seldom that we may call it never. We have rain coming on ; it will be fine as long as the sun is up ; but this heat is drawing up the vapours, which the cold of the night will condense into rain."

"And I should not be surprised if we had plenty of it," said the Parson. "I never knew the sign to fail anywhere ; but it is more perceptible here in this land of damps and vapours, than in any country I know of."

"Why, we shall not have a fish for dinner to-day of any kind," said the Squire. "I think we were a little improvident last night in giving away that fine catch of gillaroos and black trout."

"Not a bit," said the Captain ; "the Parson and I are going up the river to try for a pike among the rushes ; you had better get another boat and come with us. Besides, to tell you the truth," added he, mysteriously,

"I have got a little plan against those two old fat trout at the eel-weir over there."

"My firm belief is," said the Parson, "that those two trout must be intimately acquainted with the face of every man and boy in Belleek, and able to swear to their personal identity; besides having a good practical knowledge of every kind of bait, from a lob-worm to a midge-fly. I've tried them; the Captain has tried them; the Scholar has spent three good hours over them on end; and since that, they have been constantly watched by three policemen, day and night."

"Yes," said the Scholar; "and so well up to trap are they, that they do not give themselves the trouble of moving when they see you. They just cast a look upwards, as much as to say, 'I see you, my boy!' and then they let chafer and fly, minnow and worm, play about their noses without so much as shaking a fin."

"And thereupon I build my hopes," said the Captain. "I have got an old eel-net, and I feel certain that they will stay quite quiet, and keep looking at all my preparations with the greatest possible contempt, till I am ready to drive them into it."



“Pretty well this,” said the Squire, “for the man who cannot abide an otter or a cross-line! Is this what you call fair fishing?”

“Well, this is a regular salmon river,” said the Captain, in some confusion; “salmon are the fish here; the trout are nothing but vermin. Of course I would not do it in a trout stream! Besides, if we do not poach a little on such a day as this, we stand no chance of a fish for dinner.”

“You need not be making excuses to me,” said the Squire; “I am very tolerant of such poaching, and tolerant by deed as well as by word. But I do like consistency; and to show you how consistent I am myself, I do not mind if I go down and assist at the ceremony: that is to say, in the French sense of the word. I mean to assist by smoking my cigar on the bridge and looking on.”

“And I will assist you in the English sense of the word,” said the Scholar, “by getting into the water and helping you to set up the nets and drive the fish.”

“Come along, then, my brave Briton! That is the assistance I want. The devil take all Frenchmen and their devices!”

The Captain’s plan had, at all events, the



merit of originality, and was not a little ingenious. The scene of action was the eel-weir on the left bank, above Belleek. This eel-weir is an artificial branch of the river—a sort of canal, so contrived as to turn the flank of the great falls, and to afford to any fish disposed to take advantage of it a path apparently safe and easy into the still water above.

But, like many of the easy and pleasant paths of this world, the path in question leads but to destruction; for a stout net, hung across the narrowest part of it, which is technically termed the neck, receives the unwary migrator, and retains him in its purse until a sufficient number are collected, when the whole is shovelled unceremoniously into a square stone pit, there to await the leisure of the skinner.

This contrivance would be as fatal to the salmon as it is to the eel; for the former, with all his courage and energy, is by no means indisposed to avoid unnecessary trouble;—but Parliament has provided for his safety, the Act forbidding the nets to be set while the sun is above the horizon; and as the salmon never stirs by night, nor the eel

by day, this arrangement suits equally the convenience of both parties. The salt eel is the staple of Belleek, and the favourite Lenten food of the Roman Catholics ; and for this fish the Erne is more famous than it is even for its salmon. At the migrating season every rock is black with them ; and the annual ground-rent of the weirs alone is said to exceed 300*l*.

It was at the neck of this eel-weir that the trout had taken their station, and a pleasant station it was for them when they were once there ; for at the neck there was quite depth enough to make them easy in their minds, while the narrowness of the channel rendered it absolutely impossible that any of the numerous caddises, chafers, palmers, or half-drowned flies, sucked down from the still water above, could escape their notice ; and every now and then a small red worm, washed from the sandy banks, would come trundling down, affording them a luxury they could not expect to meet with in the stony channels of the lower river.

Below, the mouth of the eel-weir opened upon a flat slab of rock, similar to those which paved Rose Isle and the throw before

it; and here the water, being spread over a breadth of five or six yards, shallowed to about the depth of a foot, and was so clear that in the sunshine it seemed as if there were no medium but air between the rock and the spectator.

It was upon this flat that the Captain was making the preparations for his siege. His resources were but small: his whole *matériel* consisted of an unlimited supply of stones, and of about six feet of eel-netting—a fabric stout enough to hold some hundred weight of struggling eels, and, consequently, not very likely to escape the quick eye of a trout under the glare of a mid-day sun. But the Captain trusted to force rather than to artifice.

This net had been stretched across the deepest part of the shoal water, propped up here and there by triangles of sticks, for the rock was much too solid to admit of their being planted into the bottom; and the Captain on one side and the Scholar on the other, each with his train of amateur followers, were building up two loose stone walls, one from each bank, slanting inwards, and gradually narrowing the space, till they

reached the two ends of the net. Two large heaps of similar stones, by way of ammunition, were collected, one on each side of the neck, where the fish were still lying in beautiful unconsciousness, and every now and then testifying at once their presence and their contempt by rising gently at some stray wall-fly.

“Now, boys, out of the water with you!” said the Captain; “keep all quiet here, but get your stones ready, and heave when I tell you.”

And while he and the Scholar took their places at each end of the net, on their hands and knees in the water, crouching behind the wall they had been building, their followers, to the number of some twenty or thirty (for many idlers had dropped in from the fair), crept quietly up on each side of the neck.

“Ready, boys?” said the Captain.

“All ready!” was the answer.

“Then heave together!”

And an avalanche of stones came thundering into the neck of the eel-weir.

Two shadows glanced like lightning across the sunny slab; and as the Captain and the

Scholar at once precipitated themselves on the net and pinned it to the bottom, two glorious fish were seen struggling in its folds.

“Upon my word, Captain,” said the Squire, “you will make a very tidy poacher, after all! You are a promising youth; I have great hopes of you. I do not think your fish will weigh less than five pounds a-piece; they will make a good dinner for us up the river.”

“Lucky for you to have such a genius among you!” said the Captain; “for I suspect it’s little else you will catch before the sun goes down.”

“Off with you, and get your dry things on!” said the Parson; “it is time we were afloat. Come back as soon as you can, and you will find us and the boats somewhere between the islands.”

But the Squire also had some preparations to make, and the three returned with their prizes to the inn; while the Parson and his boatman Slievan lounged down to the pool of Belleek, where the boats were waiting them.

The pool of Belleek is the deep still water



above Rose Island and its rapids. It is generally full of fish, who have now surmounted every fall and rapid of the lower river, and love to rest and enjoy themselves, as the manner of their tribe is, as soon as the difficulties are overcome.

It is not, however, a very favourite place for catching: it is so still throughout, and so glassy, that it requires a dull day and a stiff breeze, and very fine fishing into the bargain.

On the present occasion the whole pool was alive with leaping salmon, splashing out of the stream, throwing themselves a yard above the surface, and glancing through it like water-rockets. A salmon river is never seen to such advantage as when the fish are sporting, as it is called; but it is a sight execrated by the fisherman, for it is an incontrovertible maxim that a sporting fish is never a feeding fish.

The Parson, however, had expected no better from the character of the day, and was sitting idly in the stern of the boat, watching their gambols, when among them his quick eye detected the round broad bubble of a true rise.

“That fish is feeding, Slievan! shove out and let go the killick in the middle of the stream. I will try that fellow with the trout-tackle.”

The boat was shoved out accordingly, and anchored some twenty yards above the fish; but in vain did the Parson cast his flies across the rise, though, with his light tackle, they fell like thistle-down. Possibly the sun might have been too bright—possibly the fish might have been ashamed of being so unfashionable as to rise at all—possibly the rise at a time so unusual might have been caused by some object of unparalleled attraction which the flies could not imitate: but the feeding fish rose no more, though the sporting salmon would throw themselves across the line and over it, and all round the boat, as if they meant to jump into it.

The Parson soon ceased to whip for the fish, and began to throw his fly at the leaves and sticks that floated past, partly by way of practice, but in a great measure from sheer idleness, and, as his companions were long in making their appearance, was fast sinking into a musing mood, when his attention was attracted by an unusual stir on the shore.

“What is the matter now, Slievan?”

“It is a faction fight, your reverence. Barney Maguire has got the eel-weir, and Tommy M‘Manus says that the old man left him the lease of it, and that Barney has burnt the will; so it’s settled they were to wait till the fair-day, and then get their people together, and fight it out peaceably.”

“Upon my word,” said the Parson, “that is a good cheap Court of Chancery they have chosen! Well, I am glad we have got a seat in the court! Let us sit down and watch their pleadings.”

It was, indeed, very edifying to see the regular, business-like, systematic manner, in which the whole affair was arranged: the spot had been selected with great judgment; the space between the fort and the river was just wide enough to fight comfortably upon, without giving too much room for straggling and independent fighting, which is much the most dangerous part of an Irish row. The stone parapets of the fort afforded admirable accommodation to any number of spectators, while the ditch obviated the smallest possibility of their being incommoded, or in any way involved in the fray. Many of the men

were helping their wives or sweethearts to scramble up the scarp, and to secure good places for seeing ; while in the front the two leaders, the plaintiff M'Manus and the defendant Maguire, were waiting patiently till the preliminary arrangements had been completed, and were standing, not a dozen yards apart, each surrounded by some half-dozen of his most trusty followers, to whom apparently he was giving directions. It was a regular judicial combat, and carried on, as in mediæval times, with Beauty the judge, and perhaps the reward, of valour.

By degrees the crowd had separated into two groups, facing north and south, with their leaders in the front ; and at a given signal — with Whoo ! and Whoop ! and Hooroosh ! — they rushed together. For ten minutes all was noise and confusion, and clattering of sticks, without much hurt on either side. It is not in these *mêlées* that deadly wounds are given or received : the fighters are too much pressed together to be able to give a fair downright stroke ; so many sticks, too, are moving at once, that it is hard if one does not catch the blow, however well aimed. Now and then, per-

haps, a man dropped, and was dragged out or crawled out himself, as the battle swayed backwards and forwards; but after staring stupidly about him for a minute or so, he spat in his hand, grasped his stick, and went at it again. A few of the older and steadier women now and then tried to lead off a husband or a brother, without any great success: but this was by no means the feeling of the majority, even of the women; and there was quite enough of waving of aprons and neckerchiefs, and clapping of hands, and screams of encouragement, from the battlements above.

“Your reverence, might I just go on shore?” said Slievan.

“What on earth do you want on shore?” said the Parson, who, as he happened just then to be sitting on the boat’s painter, was an effectual obstacle to the killick’s being weighed without his consent. Surely you do not want to fight! What on earth do you care for Maguire or M’Manus? They are no kin of yours, nor friends neither, that I know.”

“Ah, no! your reverence; but nobody likes to see the sticks going and be doing



nothing," said Slievan, convulsively griping the boat-hook.

"Sit down and be quiet, you stupid fool, and be thankful that there is a wiser head than yours in the boat!"

By this time victory had begun to declare itself. The battle, which hitherto had swayed pretty equally to the north and south alternately, as either party had mustered their strength, or, rousing their courage, had executed a fresh charge, now took a decided leaning towards the latter quarter. Some of the Maguires began to look behind them, some began to stand by to take breath; and though, excited by the screaming encouragement of the women, they turned and fought again, yet inch by inch they lost ground, till at once, with a loud and simultaneous yell, they broke and fled.

But there was little or no pursuit, and no apparent vindictiveness: the victors stood in groups, leaning on their sticks, amid the shouts of the spectators; the vanquished slunk quietly away; while some half-dozen M'Manuses came leaping and hoorooing along the eel-weir, which had been the scene of the Captain's exploits that morning, took

up and carefully folded the Maguires' nets (which afterwards they sent honestly to the beaten chieftain), while they quietly substituted their own, which had previously been brought and deposited on the ground, to be ready in case of success.

"And so ends the suit of *M'Manus v. Maguire*," said the Squire, who, with his party, had taken the first opportunity to cross the battle-field, the fight having hitherto cut them off from the rendezvous.

"Verdict for the plaintiff, and, I should think, with damages!" added the Parson, laughing, as he shoved the boat to the shore.

"I should rather imagine that each party paid his own costs," said the Captain.

"Well, well, neither costs nor damages are very heavy this time; — half-a-dozen broken heads and a cut eye or two, and that is pretty much the whole of it."

"Cheap law!" said the Captain.

"Cheap law is frequent law," said the Parson. "There will be an appeal entered against this decision on the next fair-day, if not before; and these fights do not always end without bloodshed."

“Colonel Hamilton Smith, in that extremely learned and very particularly dry book of his,” said the Captain, “shows clearly that the Celtic races may be known at once by the extra thickness of their skulls. It is a sort of special dispensation of Providence; like the thick fur of the northern animals, it adapts them to their condition of life.”

“We are to understand, then,” said the Squire, “that in breaking his neighbour’s head, Paddy is only fulfilling his mission?”

“Well, I should hope so,” said the Parson, “for fight he will, at all events. It was as much as I could do, just now, to keep Slievan here from jumping overboard to join the fray; and one would like to convince one’s self that, in so doing, he was only performing his duty in that state of life in which he was placed.”

## CHAPTER V.

### THE UPPER RAPIDS.

Pike-fishing—The Pike-fly and Spinning-bait—Wiring a Pike—The Erne of former days—Salmon Stepping-stones—The Slob-weirs of Kildoney—Reasons why these weirs are unpopular—Unguarded Remarks—The Weirs of Killarney—Coming Events—The Punch-kettle—The Double Hares—The Race—Fairies and Egg-shells—Setting in of the Rain.

WHILE this conversation was going on, the party was joined by the other boat, which had been lying at the quay on the opposite side; and the men were soon busily occupied in both of them, fitting the tackle for the upper river. A spare salmon rod or two was thrown into each of them; but more from the general order that no expedition should go out unprepared for salmon, than from any particular hope of catching them on such a day as this. The only capture they were at all likely to make was that of

pike, though even for them the day was anything but favourable.

In each boat the stern-sheets had been fitted with three sets of rings and sockets, for the purpose of receiving the butts of the rods. These were so arranged, that the centre one, which was a short stiff lake trolling-rod, not seven feet long, stood upright, while the other two projected laterally, one from each of the boats' quarters. The centre rod trailed, at the end of some thirty yards of line, a pike-fly, an extraordinary combination of every gaudy contrast of colour that could be devised, somewhat about the size of a sparrow. This was supposed to fish for itself, while the other two, furnished with litches or snap-hooks, and baited with jenkins or eels'-tails, were intended to be taken up by the fishermen as the boat approached any likely clump of weeds or rushes, and trolled into their recesses. This was the theory, at least. But, as pike-fishing is not a very exciting amusement, it generally happened in practice, that the three rods were fishing for themselves (which, to all appearance, they did quite as well as any one could have done it for them), while the



fishermen were lounging on the thwarts, smoking their cigars, talking, eating, or even reading.

This was pretty much the case on the present occasion. No one expected very much, and no one cared very greatly, whether such fish were caught or not. Fishing could hardly be called the primary object. But the scenery was pretty, though tame; the river quiet and brimming; the sunshine—rather too much of it, to be sure—but still pleasant to bask in; while the slow rate of going, best adapted for trolling, suited no less the feelings of the rowers than it did the quiet character of the scenery.

In this manner the two boats crept slowly up-stream, nearly abreast of each other, each taking its own side of the water, so that no less than six baits were trailing astern; each boat was steered by one of the party, while another kept half an eye open to watch the rods, and to see that the in-shore bait did not spin too near the reeds. These, which are the stronghold of the pike, formed in many places a sort of fringe on each side of the river, leaving a broad, placid channel in the centre, up which the boats were moving,

and a narrow one between them and the shore on each side. From time to time the reed-beds would cease entirely, leaving a broad unbroken surface from bank to bank, and disclosing views of a rich and (for Ireland) well-cultivated country.

A few small pike had been from time to time caught and hauled in by either boat; but there was nothing of any size—hardly one exceeded two pounds. Every fish, however small, was massacred ruthlessly; as much to get rid of destructive vermin, as to gratify man's natural propensity for murder.

"There goes another rise at the fly," said the Squire. "It seems to me that the flies beat the spinning-tackle hollow."

"It is always so on this river," said the Parson; "at least it is so among the smaller pike; and this is the case, also, on many of the Irish rivers. The fly is decidedly the killing bait."

"I do not think it answers much in England," said the Squire. "I have tried it, but never with anything like success."

"You may catch them with the fly even in England," said the Captain: "I have caught them with it myself. But you are

right ; it is a very much less killing bait than a spinning dace, in any water that I know. I suppose that Irish fish, like Irish men, have peculiar tastes ; for things are just reversed here."

"However," said the Parson, "for large fish the spinning-bait is by far the best, even here ; and therefore, as most people hope to catch large fish, if you have but one rod, that rod should never be armed with the fly, unless jenkins and eels'-tails are scarce."

By this time the quicker run of the water showed them that they were approaching the Upper Rapids. These rapids are of no great extent, nor of any considerable fall. They form no great obstacle to the navigation of the upper river, as they are turned by a short canal, with a lock upon it, by which the trading boats are enabled to pass them. They are by no means a good salmon-throw ; but as they are quiet, and very seldom visited, they now and then furnish a fair morning's sport.

These rapids had been the object of the expedition, not so much for their own sake, as because there was a pleasant sward of turf there, with a bunch of trees, under which

the fire might be lighted, the eggs boiled, and the Captain's two trout, with anything else they might catch, broiled or roasted for their dinner. These *al fresco* dinners were exceedingly popular with all parties, whenever they were practicable; which, indeed, was not very often the case, for Ireland boasts a weeping climate.

No one seemed very much disposed to try the rapids. They were not very likely: the sun was too bright, and the day predisposed all parties to laziness. A decided preference seemed to be given to sauntering about on the shore, or lying at full length on the turf; while the short pipe, the meerschaum, and the cigar, were all put into requisition.

—“Come here! come here!” said the Squire, who had gone some thirty or forty yards below the landing-place, and was now looking into a deep round pool, between the bulrushes and the shore, formed by an indentation of the bank. “Look here!—but come gently, and do not shake the ground or show yourselves.” And there lay an enormous pike, asleep on the surface, with his great, round, green, finless back just a-wash, showing no sign of life or motion, except the slight opening and closing of his gills as he breathed.

“I tell you what,” said the Squire, drawing back his head, “that fellow is to be had. I recollect wiring a great lumping chubb once. I caught him asleep, gorged with a water-rat, and lying on the top. And, by George! I will wire that fellow, too. Come back, all of you, and keep away from the water. Tell Paddy Mooshlan to get one of the salmon-rods together, without the top piece. Take the Irish one; it will not signify much if we break that.”

And the Squire, who was never to be caught without his materials, sitting down out of sight of the fish, occupied himself in unlaying some eel-wire, and laying it up again in a threefold twist, with a loop at one end.

This piece of machinery, formed into a springe, was bound securely to the penultimate joint of the Irish rod, which certainly was rather too slender for the purpose, but was the only long rod they had with them. To secure against its breaking — an accident which its pliability rendered more than probable, — a piece of stout water-cord was made fast to the springe, and led down the rod, taking half-a-dozen turns round it in its passage.



Armed with this, the Squire, cautiously, and on hands and knees, approached the spot. There lay the monster, quiet and motionless as before, little thinking of the numerous spectators of his slumbers, who, one by one, just raised their heads above the bank. Carefully was the long rod protruded, till the wire touched the water a foot or two before the fish's nose, so as accurately to ascertain the distance. The slightest error in that particular, the slightest touch of the wire, would have ensured the loss of the fish. Slowly, and almost imperceptibly, did the fatal noose approach the sleeping monster, who lay still unconscious of his danger ; now his sharp shovelled snout was seen through it—now it had glided on as far as his eye—an inch more, and a quick, sharp twitch, followed by a furious plunge, fixed it firmly under his gills. The rod never stood a chance. The top broke short off like a carrot, at the very first struggle ; but the water-cord stood well ; and before the pike was well awake, or could comprehend precisely what was the matter with him, he was lashing and floundering on the bank.

“ Well done, boys ! ” said the Squire, in

an ecstasy; "if that scoundrel does not weigh twenty pounds, I am a rogue. There is always something to be done on this blessed river, be the day as bad as it may. Bring here the steelyards, one of you; and you, Paddy Mooshlan, get out your waxed silk, and splice me the broken rod as soon as you like. There is no great harm done after all, but that I would readily give the whole rod for such a fish as that any day."

As the principal object of the fishermen, in coming up the river, had been to get out of the noise and confusion of the fair, no great expedition was made in hurrying on the preparations for dinner—nor, indeed, in the dinner itself. Every one was by this time pretty well convinced that little or nothing was to be done by fair fishing; and to catch another pike asleep was an event hardly to be calculated on.

"There is not a bit of use in moving yet," said the Captain; "we do not stand the ghost of a chance with this hot sun over our heads."

"I am not so much afraid of the sun," said the Parson. "The sun does not affect salmon half so much as it does trout."

“And yet you call the salmon a more shy fish,” said the Squire.

“The salmon is more shy,” said the Parson, “but his habits are different. The trout feeds on the surface, and, therefore, by the natural laws of refraction, has a very excellent chance of seeing you as he lies. The salmon lies at the bottom, rising from time to time, and immediately sinking again; his observation, therefore, is limited to a glance while he is in motion, for the water, by the same laws of refraction, shuts you out from his range, unless the banks are very high. Besides, you use a two-handed rod for salmon, and really do stand farther from him than you do from the trout. Many a fish have I caught in bright sunshine.”

“But, with all your philosophy, you do not seem very anxious to fish this throw,” said the Captain.

“There is something more than the sun against us to-day—there is the rain that is coming on, the salmon feel this long before you do: but, in truth, I do not think much of this throw, in the best of weathers. I never have caught a fish out of it myself.”

“Troth, then! your reverence should

have seen it when I was a boy," said Paddy Mooshlan ; " there was no need of a bridge, then, over the river. Your honours might have walked across on the heads of the salmon, without ever wetting your feet."

" Paddy does not hold much by your theory of the fish lying at the bottom," said the Squire.

" They most likely rose on purpose for him to step upon," said the Parson ; " he really is a sort of fresh-water Arion. How did you manage it, Paddy ? was it the Irish harp or the bagpipes that you played to them ?"

" Divil a bit of lie is there," said Paddy, sinking the particular question in a general answer.

" You really did it yourself, then — did you, Paddy ?"

" Faith, then, and I did, your honour."

" Times are pretty much changed now, I am afraid," said the Parson. " It was not very lately that this happened ?"

" Och, then ! would you have fish in the river, and that blackguard, Hector, thieving them every day ?"

This last remark evinced considerable

generalship on the part of Paddy Mooshlan, as it succeeded in diverting an attack, which he would have found some difficulty in repelling directly. Hector and his nets were a standing subject of grievance; and every failure and every bad day, and pretty nearly every unlucky gleam of sunshine, or unpropitious shower of rain, were ascribed to that cause. The case was this—the salmon laws are so framed as to protect the whole river, and a portion of the estuary into which it falls, for a certain distance from its mouth. In the days in which these laws were passed, such protection as this was quite sufficient; but the ingenuity of man had found out a method by which the object of the law could be effectually defeated, and the fish completely intercepted, before they arrived within the protected limits.

The principal difficulty to be overcome lay in the great expense of the nets, the depth of the sea requiring a corresponding depth of net, while the space to be blocked up was considerable. These difficulties had, however, been overcome by a Scotch company, who paid an enormous rent for a spot of barren sand beyond the prescribed limits,



on which to dry their nets and build their fish-houses. They had thus been able to take complete possession of the mouth of the estuary, extending their nets on stakes some hundred yards into the sea from the lands of Kildoney. This whole establishment had now been at work some three or four weeks, under the superintendence of an agent.

Hector of Kildoney must have been as bold a man as his namesake of Troy ; for the tide of popular feeling ran strong against him, and that, in Ireland at least, is no joke. The tenants were clamorous against what they considered an invasion of their landlord's rights. The water-keepers were as firm in their partizanship towards the renters of the fishery ; besides, they were quite aware that if the fishery were destroyed their own occupation was gone. The fishermen, of course, were outrageous, and not very temperate in their remarks, and equally, as a matter of course, these feelings were participated in by their attendants' followers, and followers' followers ; and, lastly, Hector was a Scotchman and a Presbyterian, and as such, obnoxious to the priests.

Under these circumstances, it is not very surprising that the office he had undertaken was considered somewhat dangerous ; and, indeed, the nets had already been attacked, and partly destroyed, in one or two instances : but Hector was a firm-hearted fellow, and seemed fully resolved to carry through the duty he had undertaken ; so he applied for and obtained a strong police force, which he quartered in extempore barracks not far from the scene of action, and, under their protection, continued to net and send off his salmon ; and hitherto, though the popular feelings were highly excited, and though a more regular and deliberate attack was daily expected, no serious interruption had taken place.

“I do not think Paddy Mooshlan is far wrong,” said the Scholar. “I do not see how a fish is to get into the river with that scoundrel’s nets across it. No one has caught anything to signify all this season, and there must be some good reason for this.”

“I really do wish that Parliament would take up the matter,” said the Parson. “I am quite sure they ought, for this new invention will be fatal, not only to this river, but to every river on the coast.”

“Parliament!” said the Squire: “you may wait till every fish in the river is destroyed, before those people trouble their heads with the matter. If anything is done at all the boys must do the job themselves.”

“Faith, then, I wish they would,” said the Scholar. “I would give a puncheon of whisky towards it with my whole heart.”

“I would give a hundred pounds,” said the Squire, “rather than that fellow should ruin the fishing in this way.”

“Do you know,” said the Captain, “it is hardly safe to talk so wildly before the men. I remember once, when I was on detachment at Killarney, I was walking back to the barracks from an unsuccessful fishing expedition, in company with a friend of mine, when the boatmen attributed our want of success to what very likely was the real cause of it—the habit which the Irish fisheries have universally fallen into, of evading the law which gives free passage to the fish on Sundays. I observed that the renters of the fisheries were cutting their own throats, for that the breed of fish must ultimately be destroyed if something were not done; and my friend incautiously replied, that he would

give twenty pounds to hear that all the weirs were broken from that to the sea. Little else was said, and little notice was taken, apparently, of his observation, but the next morning one of the men came up, and told our honours, in an undertone and with a knowing wink of his eye, that the salmon might come up now, for there was nothing to hinder them: and sure enough, so it was; they had collected a party and had demolished everything—there was not a single stake or stone left standing; and at the same time there was not a man in Killarney, except the actors, who had the smallest idea who did it, or why it was done.”

“Did your friend pay the twenty pounds?” said the Squire.

“Don’t you get a foolish habit of asking inconvenient questions,” said the Captain; “we neither of us could tell whether it was not our own heads that were to come next. So much I will tell you, that my friend was off the next day, and has not seen much of the beauties of Killarney since.”

“I should not much wonder if we heard that something of the sort was done here,”

said the Parson; "there is not a man who is not ready for it."

"Ready to talk," said the Squire. "They are all ready enough for that: but there is just this difference between England and Ireland—an Englishman says nothing, but goes and does it; while Paddy is all talk, and bluster, and blarney, and botheration."

The Parson thought that the compressed lips and frowning brows of the men, together with their unusual silence, boded something more than the Squire's *brutum fulmen*, out of the thunder-cloud that was hanging over the Scotchman's nets; but as this last remark had not been the most prudent or well-timed in the world, he made no reply, and the Captain effected an opportune diversion by observing that talking about Hector always put him into a passion, and made him feverish. "Why should we not have a bowl of punch?" said he. "Pat has got a couple of lemons, that I know; and there is plenty of sugar that we brought for the coffee: of course there must be whisky enough in one flask or another."

"Why, there is no bowl," said the Squire; "and our coffee-cups are too small to mix in."



“No bowl!” said the Parson; “what a helpless set of people you are here! There is the bait-kettle, and what would you have better? Throw those jenkins out, Pat, and give the kettle a rinse. Put on the coffee-pot full of clean water—that twice full will be as much as you can want. Our coffee-cups will serve us for glasses; and as for the men, look here!” and he cracked off the top of an egg with his crimping-knife, and, shaking out the inside into the fire, held up the shell, “I should like to know what you want more?”

The hint was soon acted upon. The coffee-pot and the saucepan that had boiled the eggs were put into requisition, and in a quarter-of-an-hour’s time the bait-kettle was steaming with punch, the smell of which attracted not only the party and their attendants, but some three or four men also, who, their day’s work being finished, were now on their road to the fair, on the principle of “better late than never.”

“Come along, boys!” said the jolly old Squire; “don’t be modest: shove in your egg-shells, too! there is plenty for all. I’ll bale the stuff with my coffee-cup. Down

with you, my men, on the grass! We will give you a passage in the boats, presently; but finish the kettle first."

"Now, Pat, fill that coffee-pot up again," said the Captain, "and put it on the fire. You will find another flask of whisky in my Macintosh-pocket—jump down to the boat for it—we must do without lemons for this brew."

"I'll tell you what," said the Parson, "if you fill up much more, you will have M'Gowan seeing his double hares again."

"Hallo, Johnny," said the Squire, "what's that?"

"Sure it's the double hares," said M'Gowan, sheepishly; "but his reverence should not be talking of that, there's bad luck in it."

"I know you have had bad luck with the single hares; they have shown you the inside of Enniskillen gaol before now: but what do you mean by the double ones?"

"Ah, now, don't be talking of that, and the sun setting, too."

"I'll tell you what it is," said the Captain, who, heretic as he was, feared neither the twilight nor its potentates: "Johnny was out

one night with his gun—what he could be doing with a gun at night, of course I know no more than you do; but, just on that rocky hill above the Mois Ruah, he put his eyes on as fine and fat a hare as you would wish to see ‘a feeding alone by the light of the moon.’ Johnny lets fly at it—the scoundrel does not often miss, that I will do him the justice to say; but, when the smoke cleared away, there were two hares, each puss kicking up her heels in defiance. Johnny blazes away again, and there are four hares. If he had only had the courage to go on, it is perfectly evident that, by the common rule of arithmetical progression, he would have stocked Tredennick’s covers; but it just then occurred to him that he had heard his grandmother say, — grandmother, was not it, Johnny?—that the wickedest witch in the whole country took the form of a hare, to bother poor innocent nocturnal sportsmen, and that to fire at her was the very hoighth of bad luck; and sure enough so it turned out in this case, for he bolted plump into the arms of Tredennick’s keepers, and they would have had him to Enniskillen as sure as a gun, or a great deal surer than

Johnny's was that night, only that somebody swore that he had gone out blind drunk, and had been firing at the stones."

"Ah, then, his reverence knows better nor that," said poor Johnny; "but best not be talking of the good people just now."

"Well then, come along, pack up the traps, and get the boats afloat."

"It is time we were off," said the Parson. "I feel a chill already, now the sun is down—to night will be a very different affair from last night. There will be wet jackets at the fair yet, depend upon it."

"All the better for us," said the Captain: "we shall get a little refreshing sleep,—a luxury I hardly reckoned on. You will give these fellows a passage to Belleek?"

"And I vote that they work their passage," said the Squire. "We have oars enough with us; let us fit out a couple of four-oars, and go back to Belleek in style."

"Why not have a race?" said the Scholar; "our boat against yours any day. I am sure these fellows can pull—every Lough Erne man pulls an oar naturally."

The Scholar was right in his conjecture, the passengers could pull; and, primed as

they were with whisky-punch, were all as eager for a race as the Scholar could wish. All hands, too, were anxious to enjoy some of the fun that was then going on at Belleek, so that the stowage of the boats was completed with more haste than good speed, the fishing and cooking apparatus being thrown in together, in a jumble that bade fair to revenge itself by giving tenfold trouble on the morrow, more especially as the sun had been for some time under the horizon, and the shades of evening were fast stealing on.

“Ready in your boat?” said the Squire, taking the yoke-lines.

“All ready,” said the Parson, who was steering his own boat.

“Hourrah, then, boys! Off you go!” And the boats shot out together into the deep water.

For some time there was no perceptible advantage gained on either side. The men, though not used to pull together, were all well enough accustomed to the oar, most of the carriage of these parts being by water, and they bent their backs to it and struck out lustily and well. A severe critic might have detected some little eccentricities in



their style of pulling, but the clumsy boats were dashing through the water at a speed they had been little accustomed to.

“Give way, my boys!” said the Squire.

“That’s the stroke! Bend to it!” said the Parson. “Why, in the name of all that’s unlucky, can’t you sit still? What on earth are you fidgeting about?”

But the Scholar, who was a little cramped among the heterogenous articles that had been lumped into the boat, had begun arranging them; and, as ill-luck would have it, first put his hands upon the late punch-bowl, the bait-kettle; into which, though still containing some remains of the punch, the coffee-cups and egg-shells, which had served as drinking glasses, had been huddled promiscuously.

The Scholar carefully picked out the coffee-cups, and then unceremoniously emptied the kettle over the side. The men’s countenances fell.

The Parson, who had been attending to the business of the race, and had addressed the Scholar just before, only parenthetically, caught sight of the men’s faces, and, turning round to see what had attracted their atten-

tion, descried, far astern through the dim twilight, two of the egg-shells bobbing about in the wake of the boat; which, before he had time even to think, the darkness and distance shut out from his view.

“ Oh, by George! this will never do,” said he, as with a pettish jerk on his port yoke-line he gave up the race. “ Back your port-oars, men—give way starboard—wind her at once. That will do”—as her head came up stream—“ Now give way, all, with a will!”

But there was no need to exhort them, the men were thoroughly frightened, and stretched out as if their lives depended on it; as, no doubt, they were fully convinced they did.

“ Easy now, men. Easy now. I see them plain enough,” and he stood up to have a better view. “ In bow! Oars, all of you!” And as the bowman laid in his oar, the Parson steered upon the innocent causes of all this tumult, which were still bobbing about as if nothing was the matter.

The bowman clutched them nervously and squeezed them to pieces in his horny hand. The men drew a long breath together, as if they had been suddenly relieved from a

weight that oppressed them. "Ah, bedad, now that was well done. Ah, have ye got them entirely? Well now, I thought they would have skimmed away from under."

"What on earth is all this about?" said the bewildered Scholar.

"Why, you threw the egg-shells overboard, did not you? Not one of these fellows would have slept a quiet sleep for a month, for thinking of the ill-luck that was coming upon them through the water fairies, who had made boats of their egg-shells."

"What absurd nonsense!" said the Scholar. "So you spoiled the race for an egg-shell!"

"You spoiled the race," said the Parson. "You would not have got a man to pull another stroke, under any circumstances. We lost nothing by turning back."

"Hillo!" shouted the Squire, who, seeing that something was wrong, without being able to make out distinctly what, had also winded his boat, and was now coming up the river with the full force of his oars. "What's the matter? Who is overboard?"

"Why the Parson ought to be," said the Scholar: "he has been kicking up all this

fuss about a couple of egg-shells, and putting it all upon the men, telling us that they believe some absurd story or other. The fact is, he believes it himself."

"And if you had shot and fished among the Slieve Ghie mountains, and their lakes and streams, as much as I have, and lived as much with their people, you would believe it too," said the Parson; "or, at least, you would act as if you did, which comes to the same thing."

"The truth is," said the Captain, "nine out of ten of us do believe with our hearts, if we do not with our heads. We say boldly enough that it is all nonsense; but who would sail on a Friday if he could help it? And who does not stick his spoon through the bottom of his egg-shell when he has finished eating the egg?"

"And your tenth-man, your unbeliever, is neither the wisest nor the best of the ten," said the Parson.

"I do hate your Utilitarian, who turns up his rationalising nose at all popular belief," said the Captain. "The superstitious man before the sceptic, any day."

"Yes," said the Parson, "better believe

too much than too little ; it is quite true that England ceased to be merry England when the fairies left off dancing on the green."

By this time the boats were in motion, and were proceeding down the stream again, side by side. The men pulled out well and steadily together ; but it was rather as if they were all anxious to arrive at their journey's end, than from any thing like emulation. There was no longer any disposition to race, or even to joke and laugh. They spoke gravely, and in undertones ; their minds seemed sobered and subdued, as if they had been delivered from some great danger.

And this feeling was increased by the gradual but complete change that had come over the heavens. No clouds had arisen, nor a breath of wind ; but, as night fell, the unnatural and unhealthy-looking haze, that had all day long hung over the face of the country, gradually thickened, so that not a star could shine through : the light left by the setting sun seemed not as if it had faded, but as if it had been smothered up by the darkness. Everything felt damp and wet,



without any one knowing how it came to be so ; fingers stuck to each other and to the sides of the boat, or to anything that they touched ; chills seemed to be creeping through the air, though no one could say that the evening was exactly cold ; the air seemed to be hot and cold at the same moment.

By the time the low, steady, earth-shaking sound of the falls began to strike the ear, it was not easy to tell whether it was a very heavy dew or a very fine, quiet rain, that was settling down upon everything. The night fell so dark that the forms of the men, as they rose to their oars, could scarcely be seen by the steersman : every one felt a sort of relief as the lights of the fair rose upon the view ; and it was with more regard to their own personal comfort than the preservation of their tackle, that the fishermen leaped on shore as soon as the boats touched land, and, pushing through the still crowded street, dried their chilled hands at the jolly blaze of Mrs. Johnstone's bright turf fire.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE ENTOMOLOGY OF THE ERNE.

Resources for a Wet Day—Hooker's Works—Elements of Fly-fishing—The Use of being able to make your own Flies—Edmondson's Flies—Bowness's Flies—Flies in use on the Erne—The Butterfly—The Mixed Wing—The Parson—Rods—Comparison between English and Irish Rods—The Squire's Dream—The Flags of Rose Isle—The Legend of Enniskillen—Unexpected Success of the Squire's New Fly.

THE Parson's anticipations had proved correct. There were, indeed, wet jackets at the fair, for throughout the whole night the rain came down in one steady, regular, continuous down-pour. There were no furious gusts, or rattling showers, as in the last break-up of the weather, but a constant, persevering, soaking rain, that seemed as if it would never alter and never end.

Dimly and wearily did the morning dawn upon the soaked and draggled remnants of

the fair ; and the dripping remains of the canvass booths, the upset stalls, the wet and broken hampers, the dirty straw, and the muddy poached-up standings where the cattle had been penned, made the desolate street look ten times more desolate, as the Parson took his morning's observation from the window.

There had been a short cessation about eight o'clock, which had given some little hope ; but the weather had fairly broken up, and the whole week which followed was but one unintermitting continuance of cold, chilly, ungenial weather, never inviting, and interspersed now and then with sudden storms, or hours of cold piercing rain.

The season, certainly, was not favourable ; but unless the water was actually out of order, which was not yet the case, the weather was seldom permitted to offer much hindrance to the fishermen. They might start, perhaps, somewhat later in the day, and with somewhat less alacrity. They were never without their Macintosh jackets ; but no day had hitherto kept them from the river : and though in all that time there never had been what might be called good

fishing weather, yet there were few days in which fish had not been caught by one or other of them.

There is one great advantage in a lake river, and that is a thing that ought to be borne in mind by all fishermen who are choosing their summer's fishing-ground. It is much less affected than any other description of stream by the changes of the weather. A whole night's steady rain will change the colour of almost any water ; but it has little effect on the Erne. There are absolutely no tributaries to the stream, and for the impurities of those which fall into the lake, the lake itself acts as an enormous cess-pool ; all discolouring matter sinks quietly to the bottom, while the surface, which in all cases must be the clearest part, is skimmed off by the river.

A week's incessant rain had, however, at last tinged the whole mass, and the very surface had assumed the brown yellow hue of the bog-peat, thickened by the mud which had been washed from the sides of the hills. The water came pouring over Rose Isle Fall "like the mane of a chestnut steed : " and the Captain, the most energetic and persevering

of the party, came back from his morning inspection sulky and disconsolate, and, with a gesture that told "more than words could say," silently hung up his rod in the brackets. Cold weather he could stand; for clean water from the clouds he cared no more than a Spartan; but dirty water in the river would beat Isaac Walton himself; so the Captain, taking one more look at the leaden sky, pronounced oracularly that nothing was to be done that day.

"Nothing to be done!" said the Parson. "I think we have a pretty average of broken tackle and washed flies to repair: I am fairly ashamed to open my book, and see some half-dozen old stock-flies that even a pike would turn up his nose at, and a dozen or two well-washed specimens that have been presented to every salmon in the river. I say that a regular wet day is quite a God-send; and, speaking for myself only, I mean to take my pleasure here."

And he seated himself down on a heap of turf that he had been building in the corner of the room, close by the window, so as to have the full benefit of all the light there



was, and had covered with an old, worn-out P.-jacket.

“ Here I and Paddy sit ;

Here is my throne, and let blue devils bow to it !”

“ Come along, Pat Gallagher ! Hand us down Hooker’s works ; we will have a good course of study to-day, and nothing to interrupt us.”

The ponderous folio which the Parson had so designated, was a sort of cross between a book and a small portmanteau. In the early days of his fishing-youth he had had it splendidly bound in purple morocco, and lettered at the back with the above learned and appropriate title ; and though, since then, rough journeys and frequent use had somewhat dimmed its earlier glories, it still was a goodly volume : but the interior was the Parson’s pride, and he gazed with fondness on it as he unbuckled the strap that secured it.

The first leaf contained six rows of parchment pockets, twelve in each row ; these were filled with every variety of hook, from *a* to *ccc*, of genuine Limerick manufacture, for the Parson had imported them himself ;

and from 1 to 12 of their London imitations, together with lip hooks, double hooks, long-shanked hooks, midge hooks, and numerous other varieties; swivels for pike and trout litches, spare rings for the rods; all duly labelled on the outside. Then came full thirty shades of pigs' wool, by far the best material for the rough-bodied flies of the larger sort, as it is the only substance, besides fur, which completely withstands the water. The edges of all these pockets had been carefully painted in water-colours, so as to match and indicate their contents. Then came as many shades of floss-silk, each wound on its separate card; then the tying silks, of every degree of fineness. The next pockets contained the furs—the water-rat, the brown spaniel, the chinchilli, the sable, the bear, and the beaver. Then came the smaller feathers—the blue jay, the green-blue kingfisher, the yellow topping, the orange cock-of-the-rock, the crimson toucan, the copper-coloured golden pheasant, beautifully barred with black, and hundreds of other varieties; then large flannel leaves, extending across the whole book, for the larger feathers—the wing and tail feathers of the argus, the tails

of common and golden pheasants, the black cock, the cock-of-the-wood, the grey mallard and barred teal, landrails' and starlings' wings, hackles, natural and stained, of every dye that nature or art could devise. On the end leaves, the pockets were of good stout morocco leather, and contained silkworm gut of every quality and hue, gimp for pike, a coil of brass wire, barbers' silk, Chinese twist, a spare reel-line or two, and a case of instruments, consisting of penknives, scissors, files, pliers, and such-like, with a flat box for cobblers' wax, leads, and India rubber.

The Captain was sitting on the head of the stair-cover before mentioned, applying himself to the choice of a cigar : he also had his material-book open before him, but it was very much smaller than the Parson's ponderous tome, and contained not more than one-fourth part so much : it was, in fact, little more than judicious selections from the judicious Hooker. It was modestly labelled, "Elements of Fly-Fishing," and was not so large but that it would ride comfortably in a fishing-basket, or, on an emergency, squeeze into a pocket ; but, somehow or other, it was always at hand, which the Parson's was not,

and frequently supplied that worthy with necessaries ; of which his own book contained, no doubt, a goodly store, only that, invariably at the very time it was most wanted, it was reposing securely some twenty or thirty miles from the scene of action, having been left behind on account of its bulk and weight. And no one could say that the Captain's flies were less killing than those of his companion, or that the particular material required to produce any desired effect was ever deficient.

The Squire's stores were contained in a walnut-tree box. They were intrinsically worth twice as much as those of both his companions' put together, but their arrangement was something like that of a midshipman's chest, where everything is at the top and nothing at hand ; so that, with stores enough to have fitted out a tackle-shop, he was continually borrowing the commonest articles.

“ I cannot see the use of your bothering yourselves with all these things,” said the Scholar, whose collection of salmon-flies, amounting to some hundreds, exhibited specimens of every manufacture in the three

kingdoms. "Surely, those fellows whose business it is to make flies will make them very much better than you can. Why cannot you go to Bowness or Kelly for what you want?"

"I will tell you why," said the Parson; "when I first handled the double rod, flies cost half-a-crown a-piece; and you know, by experience, that, if there is anything of a breeze, a young hand may safely reckon upon whipping off three or four every day of his life: now ten shillings a-day is a pretty fair rent. It was necessity that first drove me to fly-making, and what necessity commenced was continued from choice."

"The necessity I sympathise with," said the Scholar; "the choice I cannot understand. You do not whip off your flies now; your ordinary wear and tear does not come to half-a-dozen a-week; and, whatever was the case in former times, I can answer for it that you may now get from Edmondson as many flies as you like at nine shillings a-dozen."

"Hardly that," said the Parson, "if you want the more expensive sorts. These Erne flies, especially, you will not get worth



anything at less than eighteen shillings a-dozen, taking one with another. But I will tell you another reason. What do you mean to do with yourself to day?"

"Do? Why, when I have finished my cigar, I mean to go down to the kitchen, and have a little talk with Anne and Sally."

"I do not doubt you the least in the world; but even Anne and Sally cannot make love for a whole rainy day. Cigars, too, are delicious; but they have an end. Books are too heavy to be carried to the ends of the world, and you can get none in Ireland, for the natives do not read. My day to-day will be one of scientific and instructive amusement; I should like to know what yours will be?"

"A very pleasant one, I have no doubt; no one need be at a loss for amusement in an Irish kitchen. The chances are, I shall get up a fight or a dance before an hour is over; or, at all events, I can take a portrait of the pig, or sketch the cocks and hens. So here goes," he said, proceeding down the stairs, but not very eagerly or rapidly, "like a knight-errant in search of adventures."

"And from the very same cause," said the

Squire, as soon as he was out of hearing, “an utter inability of occupying his mind in any more profitable manner.”

The Squire was just then sitting before the fire with both feet on the fender, and superintending, with the eye of a connoisseur, the workmanship of Johnny M’Gowan and Paddy Mooshlan, who, seated on the floor, were commencing a regular overhaul of all his books and tackle.

“In one respect, though,” he continued, “our worthy friend now departed is quite right. If a man has time, on passing through Liverpool, to go to Edmondson’s, in Church Street, he may have his choice from hundreds, not to say thousands, of flies, every one of which, properly handled, would kill a salmon,—aye, and get some valuable advice, too, into the bargain, if his journey lies northward: but Edmondson does not know a great deal about this country. And I will tell you what he may do, if he has plenty of money. He may go to Bowness’s,\* in Bell Yard, and get anything made for him that he pleases, for any water, and ten times

\* Now Chevalier.

more neatly tied than anything he can do for himself."

"Yes," said the Parson, "I believe firmly, that if you ask for a dozen of dodo hackles with phoenix wings, you will have them; and if you are curious about a roc's tail feather, Bowness will find some Sindbad to get it for you: but, for all that, you must have a good pattern, and a pretty competent knowledge of the art yourself, so as to give your own directions; for, though I would trust Bowness in the dark in the choice of trout-flies, his advice is worth nothing for salmon."

"I do not think they have much originality there," said the Squire. "In fact, I suspect his own personal experience does not incline much to salmon; but they copy like Chinamen."

"But a man ought to have something more in his pocket than his half-pay," said the Captain, "if he goes there. What do you think of the Dublin makers? I myself use no flies but my own; but I have seen some nice-looking things there, and, at all events, they are cheap enough."

"My experience in the native manufac-

ture,” said the Squire, “is not very extensive. I bought but a dozen or so, by way of specimens, as I always do wherever I go ; and these were not cheap, for they whipped to pieces, and washed out. Bad material and careless workmanship are not cheap, whatever you pay for them.”\*

“After all,” said the Parson, “the best thing that a man can do, wherever he goes, is to buy specimens of the flies of the river on the spot, and to improve upon them if he can. And supposing he cannot tie his own flies, or is too idle to do it, or prefers flirting with the Annes and Sallys of the neighbourhood, all he has to do is to find out the fishing genius of the place, and to set him to work. I never knew a river yet, that had not some poaching disreputable rascal belonging to it, who could make flies ten times as well as I could, and use them, too, when they were made.”

“In fact, to do what we are doing now, minus the disreputable rascal part of the business,” said the Captain ; “but in order

\* The Author, correcting for the year 1850, has great pleasure in being able to record a decided improvement in the Dublin flies.

to do this, you must necessarily carry your own materials."

"And so you *must* carry your own materials, and that, whether you tie yourself or employ others to tie for you. Our friend the Scholar may throw a good line, and hook a good fish, when he has got some cleverer man than himself to point out the throws, and may land him, too, with Slievan to gaff for him; but he will never be a fisherman as long as he lives; no, nor ever turn out such a Killmany that——" And the Parson held up his work to the light, admiring his workmanship, and drawing out, with the point of his needle, two or three fibres of the hackle that had been looped down in finishing off the head.

The artificial entomology of the Erne is far more brilliant and beautiful than that of any other river, excepting, perhaps, the spring-flies of the Shannon. Its flies, compared with those of the Scotch waters, or even those of its neighbour river the Bundraos, put one in mind of the gay plumage of the tropics, by the side of an English nightingale or skylark.

Before the arrival of our fishermen, it might be said to consist of two distinct



genera, the Butterfly and the Mixed wing, each containing several species : but, some two or three years before the date of these conversations, the fishermen had added to these a third genus of fly, differing in every particular from the other two ; and this, from its inventor, was generally known by the name of “ the Parson.”

The Butterfly is distinguished readily from all others by its under wings, which, being made of the tippet feather of the golden pheasant tied on whole, give it the appearance of a copper-coloured butterfly. In all the species of this fly alike, the tail is, or ought to be, of yellow topping. The tip is sometimes plain, but, more generally, it is formed by two or three rounds of black ostrich or peacock’s harl ; the body is invariably of floss-silk, hackled, and turned with tinsel or twist, which is of gold or silver, according to the colour of the body : this colour, which should be changed according to the colour of the sky or water, indicates the different species of the fly. These are as follows :—

1. Red—with a natural red, crimson, or black hackle.

2. Yellow—with a yellow, brown, or black hackle, for stained water.

3. Green—with a green hackle, or black hackle, for sunshine.

4. Blue—with a blue hackle (silver twist or tinsel), for sunshine.

5. Fiery brown—with a natural red hackle.

6. Claret—with a black hackle (silver).

The shoulder hackle in all the species is generally of blue jay, which is prepared by splitting the blue-barred feather of the jay's wing, and scraping out the pith; but small flies are frequently hackled up with the body hackle, or with the prevailing colour of the fly, and fitted with wing coverts, generally of kingfisher. All these flies are headed with black ostrich, if large, or black silk, if small; horned with maccaw, yellow or red, according to the prevailing colour of the fly, and winged with grey mallard, of which the darkest, taken from the oldest birds, is the best.

The mixed wing genus has no underwings whatever, but its wings are formed by mixing together the fibres of any description of feather, according to the judgment of the maker. The prevailing colour

is dark orange, which is produced by a liberal mixture of cock-of-the-rock ; or else greenish grey. Before tying the wings, a good shoulder must be prepared by taking half-a-dozen turns of silk, and the fibres are made to separate and stand on end by pressing down their stalks with the thumb-nail, while the tying silk is lapped over them. The tails are also of mixed feathers, and the bodies generally of pigs' down pulled out with the needle, though, in small flies, these are often made of silk, and hackled and tinselled, as in the other genus.

They bear something of the same relation to the butterflies that in trout fishing the buzz does to the winged fly.

The Parson genus is much longer, slimmer, and more elegant. This class is known by their bright yellow wings, which are formed from six or eight toppings of the golden pheasant. In the original fly, which still bears the name of "the Parson," tail, tip, body, and hackle, are all yellow, as well as the wings, and the tinsel is gold ; it is hackled over the wings with blue jay, or else fitted with wing-coverts from the kingfisher, with a black ostrich head.

This genus has three varieties, Kill-many, Kill-more, and Jack the Giant-killer. The first differs from the Parson in having a claret body and hackle; the second retains the yellow body, though it is generally of a deeper shade, but has a bright crimson under-wing, and a strong splash of the same colour in the coverts; while Jack the Giant-killer has a green body and hackle, with crimson or green coverts. The whole tribe are horned with yellow maccaw, except the last species, which is red. The Parson flies are best adapted for stained water, as being better calculated to attract the notice of the fish; Jack is intended for sunshine; Kill-many and Kill-more for dull weather.

The whole of this tribe of flies is expensive, and that is their principal drawback; but the material of which they are almost entirely composed, the crest of the golden pheasant, is rare and difficult to procure.

A cheap substitute for this class of flies may be thus made: yellow parrot-tail, yellow silk body, with a very full yellow hackle, mallard wings, with two small yellow hackles

tied in with them, and hanging loose over the back, maccaw horns.

“It is strange that such things as this can catch a fish,” said the Squire, coming to the window to examine critically a yellow parson which M‘Gowan had just turned out. “What fly in the whole world is at all like this? They say that the mixed wing is the dragon fly, and the butterfly the imitation of some possible butterfly; but this is like nothing in heaven or earth. A Mus-sulman might paint it without offending against his Koran.”

“No,” said the Parson, “it is not like anything in heaven or earth; but it is very like something in the water: it is like a shrimp, which I imagine to be the food of the salmon when at sea: he comes into the river, is uncommonly at a loss for his usual dinner, when he sees a little dancing fellow with all these sharp-pointed wings, as we are pleased to call them, jumping about in the running water, and he thinks, of course, it is one of his old friends.”

“I should not wonder,” said the Squire.

“I am sure of it,” said the Parson. “Re-



member how you fish with twenty yards of line out ; nothing that you could do would keep your fly on the surface of the water, as you do keep your trout flies, which really are flies, and not shrimps. You do not try to keep your salmon fly in such a position ; half your line is in the water, and your fly six inches under it. And think, too, how you fish a trout fly ; you draw it across the stream quietly, but to your salmon rod you give a waving motion ; and it is to enable you to do this without wearing a hole in your trousers, that the salmon rod is fitted with that round wooden button at the butt, instead of a spike. And what effect do you suppose this motion has upon the fly ? It moves in a succession of jumps, like nothing whatever that has life, except a shrimp, but exactly like that. Depend upon it, your fly is a shrimp."

" I should not be surprised if you are right," said the Squire. " I was remarking the strange, life-like, jumping motions of my fly the other day, from the top of that rock at the Captain's Throw, and was thinking, that, though they were the motions of an animal, they were not the motions of a fly."

“That Captain’s Throw is worth anything to us fishermen,” said the Parson. “You seldom catch anything there, to be sure, because the rock on which you stand overhangs the water, and the fish see you; but then, in return, you see them, and your line, and your fly, and everything that takes place. Many a good lesson have I got on the Captain’s Rock.”

“But supposing that you are right,” said the Squire; “supposing the Parson genus of flies is intended to imitate the shrimp, ought it not to be common to all rivers? whereas, to the best of my belief, it is peculiar to the Erne.”

“If it is peculiar to the Erne, it is only because it is not generally known,” said the Parson. “I have tried the fly in Norway, and to some purpose too, especially where the waters are at all tinged, or thick.”

“Have you seen that clever book by ‘Ephemera?’” said the Captain. “He has given the picture of a fly as like our Erne Parson as can be, to which he assigns the name of Goldfinch.”

“‘Ephemera’ is mistaken,” said the Parson; “our king of flies was invented on the

banks of the Erne, in the year 1836, as I can avouch. The real Goldfinch differs from it in many important particulars; it has a jointed body, backed with topping, or camel's hair, and has a narrow stripe of brown argus in the wings: besides, it is exclusively a Shannon fly, and I believe is never seen off that river."

"It is backed with other hair besides camel's sometimes," said the Squire, "and is used on other rivers besides the Shannon."

The Captain began to grow red, and to look unconscious with all his might; while the Parson cast an inquiring glance across the room.

"Lady's hair, I mean," continued the Squire; "and I am sure I need not tell you who tied the fly."

"Name! name!" said the Parson. "We have no secrets about our flies at Belleek. Where did you get your material?"

"I will not tell thee whence 'twas shred,  
Or from what guiltless victim's head,"

said the Captain, theatrically.

"I am sure you need not," said the Squire; "all the world knows it was from the fair head of Mary Anne C——."

“Were you short in fiery brown pig’s wool?” said the Parson, maliciously. “You should have come to me; I had plenty.”

“Fiery brown!” exclaimed the Captain. “If ever there was true auburn in this world ——”

“There, there; that will do,” broke in the Squire; “that will do. Of course it was auburn, that is the ladies’ colour; it is only men’s hair that is red. But what good did you do with your auburn fly? Was anything besides yourself meshed in the mazes of *Necæra*’s hair?”

“It is very odd,” said the Captain; “I am not at all superstitious, as you know; but the fact is—you need not laugh, Parson—that I never did have such success with any fly that I ever made, as I had with that.”

“Did not the consciousness of the value risked at the end of your line make your hand unsteady?”

“It did,” said the Captain; “you cannot conceive the state of mind I was in when I lost it at last: I hung it on the trees at *Mois Ruah*.”

“Why on earth did you not climb up after it, then?” said the Parson.

“ So I did, and searched half the day ; but I had broken my line short off, and could never get a glimpse of it ; and as to making another, that was altogether out of the question. I had not the material ; it is not so common as pig’s down.”

“ By the way, Paddy,” said the Squire, “ that big Irish rod, the fellow that I used with the pike the other day, did that get much damage ?

“ Divel a hapor’t’h !” said Paddy Mooshlan. “ I did not shorten it three inches at the splice. Your honour might have landed a schoolmaster\* with it ten minutes afterwards.”

“ I do not above half like those Irish rods,” said the Parson ; “ they are awkward concerns.”

“ They have the advantage of costing about one-third the price of your London

\* Few salmon except the “ lost fish ” arrive at their native river singly. They cruise in companies technically called schools ; each school is supposed to be under the command of an old and experienced fish, who is called the schoolmaster. In the Erne a schoolmaster seldom weighs less than twenty-two or twenty-four pounds.



affair," said the Captain; "and, for a strong man, Kelly's rods answer extremely well."

"Yes, for a strong man," said the Parson; "but they are so ill-balanced and so top-heavy, that it is killing work to us mere mortals: besides, they have all too much play in the third joint, which makes them work like cart-whips when you are casting, and prevents your getting a command over your fish when you have struck him."

"It is made so purposely," said the Captain; "that and the heavy top together give a beautiful spring to the line. I am sure that you can send out a yard or two more with one of Kelly's rods than you can with any other."

"You can, but I cannot," said the Parson; "I cannot stand the weight,—I do not mean avoirdupois, but the balance—the weight on my muscles as I spring it. I would never possess an Irish rod. For beauty, for elegance, for lightness, and for strength, give me Bowness."

"And for price?" added the Captain.

"Well, for price," said the Parson. "I grant you that Bowness is the dearest shop I know; but a well-seasoned rod, well taken

care of, will last a man half a lifetime ; and it is very poor economy to save a pound at the expense of an aching pair of arms and shoulders every time you go out. Bell Yard against the world, say I."

"Yes, for fine weather," said the Squire ; "and, indeed, most of my own tackle comes from that shop ; but for storm, and rain, and a heavy head-wind, let me have one of those stubby fellows that Edmondson makes for the Scotch fishing. Without half the elegance and finish of Bowness, but stiff and obstinate as a Presbyterian, it forces out its line in the very teeth of difficulties ; and as for reel-line ——"

"Oh, there I yield at once," said the Parson ; "Edmondson is the man. Bowness's silk and hair lines always kink, and go on plaguing you to the end of the chapter ; they are all laid up too tight. And as for those Dublin silk lines, they cost, it is true, just half as much as the others ; but no one who has ever tried them in rainy weather would think of them again : they cling to the rod as if they were dipped in glue."

"Have you ever tried the oiled silk lines

that they make at Limerick?" said the Captain.

"I have one of them," said the Squire, "and I am disposed to think very favourably of it. It is very elastic, and strong enough to land a shark. I have fished with it during the last week, and have every reason to be satisfied with it."

"The London imitation is not worth a stiver," said the Parson. "I gave mine away last week to Pat, and I believe he has made it over to the grocer to tie up parcels with. But I have this morning had a consignment from O'Shaughnessey's at Limerick, and I mean to give them a fair trial; they are cheap enough, at any rate."

"It will be some time before you try your silk lines or anything else," said the Scholar, who, not having met with the amusement he expected in the kitchen, had put on his Macintosh, and had gone down to look at the river. "The water is positively like coffee, and good strong coffee, too."

"Not so long as you think," said the Parson. "I see signs of clearing in the sky. The clouds do not hang so low as they

did ; and if we have anything like fine weather, you will be astonished to see how soon a lake-river runs off: the cesspool principle, which made it slow to colour, makes it also quick to clear. I should not wonder if we caught a fish to-morrow."

"If there is any truth in dreams, I ought to catch one to-day," said the Squire ; "for I dreamed of nothing else last night. I went through the whole ceremony, from making the fly to landing the fish."

"What fly was it, your honour?" said Pat, who, at the mention of the dream, had been listening eagerly.

"Well, it was a queer fly," said the Squire ; "I question whether it ever had an existence in real earnest."

"But what fly was it?" persisted Pat.

"Well," said the Squire, laughing, "it had a mixed tail, black body and hackle, with gold twist, blood-red hackle on the neck, blood-red under-wings, wings of argus black spotted with white, black ostrich head, and red maccaw horns."

"A very pretty fly to catch a whale," said the Captain. "I do not think it will catch anything else—at least, out of fairy land."

“Has your reverence got a spotted argus?” said Pat, who had already selected the other feathers and silks.

“Well done, Pat!” said the Squire. “He takes my dream for an oracle.”

“And you for a conjurer,” said the Captain. “I am afraid he will find himself mistaken.”

All this time Pat had been working away with diligence, and having received the argus from the Parson, who soon found it among some of his miscellaneous stores, he produced a very respectable-looking fly.

“Well,” said the Squire, taking it to the window, “the fly is well tied, at all events; and I’ll use him the first time I go out.”

“Won’t your honour be going out to-day, then?” said Pat. “The rain is nothing to speak of now; and I’ll engage we’ll make the dream come true.”

“To-day?” said the Squire. “Why, you hear what they say of the water. But I do not mind if I do; I want a walk. Will you come, Parson?”

“Not with the rod,” said the Parson, laughing. “I have had no dream; the Oracle has been silent to me: it is only



the favourites of the good people who stand a chance."

"I hope you do not suppose that I believe that nonsense of Pat's?"

"Oh, no; of course not; but I really have no fancy to go slopping through the wet grass and muddy roads for nothing. Come, Captain, take a turn on the flags of Rose Isle. Light your cigar, and come."

"Well, here goes for the river!" said the Squire, putting on his Macintosh as he went down stairs; while Pat took down his rod and handed it to him out of the window; and the Scholar threw a shoe at him for luck.

"It will never do to fish this river to-morrow," said the Captain, as they crossed the little bridge that connects Rose Isle with the main land; "it is perfectly impossible that the water should run clear so soon: look how it comes over the little fall; it is a regular flood."

"We must try Lough Melvin again," said the Parson.

"Why, the Squire will be having out those confounded cross-lines," said the Captain, "and that is terrible slow work. If we

are to have a turn at lake-fishing, what do you say to Lough Derg? We have none of us seen that."

"I have," said the Parson, "and know something about it. You will not find Lough Derg so good fishing-ground as Lough Melvin: but there are some goodish trout in it, too; and it is worth seeing for its own sake. I do not mind if I do give up a day to it. We must make the Squire go."

"And go pretty early," said the Captain; "it cannot be less than fourteen or fifteen miles off."

"No," said the Parson, "that is about the distance; but we can sleep at Pettigoe,—there is a very fair inn there,—and come back early the next day. I suppose by that time the river will be ready for us, and one day's fishing will be quite enough for Lough Derg."

"Upon my word," said the Captain, stopping and looking anxiously into the water, which, though the actual rain had ceased, was still rising and coming down thicker and thicker. "I am not quite so sure about the river being ready for us; it is like a winter's flood."

“ I do not know when I have seen it so high,” said the Parson. “ If a good stiff gale from the west were to spring up just now and bank up the waters, the lands and title of Enniskillen might pass back again into the old family.”

“ What do you mean ?” said the Captain.

“ It is a story of these parts,” said the Parson, “ and rather characteristic of the people, too. I suppose you have been here long enough to have heard, that all this country once belonged to the families of Maguire, MacManus, and O’Ruarke, who used to live here in great happiness and prosperity, and fight peaceably among themselves all the year round, much in the style in which we saw them fighting the other day. And so they might have gone on to the end of the chapter, had not Oliver Cromwell put an end to their golden age, and made them fast friends, by attacking them all three. Well, you know the result,—he kicked out every mother’s son of them, and put very worthy men, friends of his own, into their place. But I think it is very likely that you do not know, what I believe is perfectly true, that the representatives of the ejected families keep

religiously their old title-deeds, and mark from time to time the old boundaries, regularly bequeathing or entailing them, just as if they conveyed the actual possession of the different properties. They do this in faith, waiting for the good time that is coming, when every man shall get his own again.

“ This is done among all the families, and all the subdivisions of the great clans ; but on the chief of the Maguires there hung a special fate, by which he lost, and must inevitably have lost, his title and property. So, also, there is a special prophecy by which the representative of the family must as inevitably regain it. The thing is certain. All that is obscure is the time, and this will be indicated by the river.

“ I had the story myself from the lips of the Lord of Enniskillen *de jure* ; who, though in possession of the title-deeds, and ultimately, no doubt, the transmitter of the true succession, was not too proud to serve, in the mean time, as deputy-assistant-helper, or something of that sort, in the stables of the Lord of Enniskillen *de facto*. I am speaking now of some twenty years ago, when I was a boy ; and what has become of this

ragged Lord of Enniskillen, or whether he has been gathered to his mighty forefathers, and succeeded by his son, whose title, I presume, must have been Lord Maguire, not Lord Cole, I cannot say.

“ However, this is his story. You recollect the little island, which you see on your left hand as you enter the town of Enniskillen by the northern bridge. It is not half-a-dozen yards across, but it once contained a cell, or kill, and is the real Enniskillen, or Island of the Church, from which the ancient lord took his title; as, I presume, the modern lord does now. Now, upon this island depends the fate of the possessor of that property and title. Whenever the flood at Enniskillen rises high enough to cover that island, both the one and the other pass out of the family that holds them. If there ever were lords *Dei gratia*, it is the lords of Enniskillen.

“ Well, the story goes, that in Cromwell’s time the Maguires aided the other western families, who had now sense enough to lay aside their domestic feuds, and were making good head against the Sassenagh; when there came on one of these lake floods, fol-



lowed by a furious west wind and a banking up of the waters in the narrow strait.

“ The Maguires were encamped upon the great island, which was their stronghold, and throughout the long and stormy night did they sit on the bank watching the palladium of their family. Women were weeping, men were trembling, priests were invoking every saint in the Irish calendar ; but still the waters rose and rose, and the little island grew small, and smaller still. There was hope yet ; for the slightest lull in the wind, the slightest alteration in its direction, would have permitted the waves to roll back. But it was not to be. As the day broke, the gale, instead of diminishing, increased in fury ; and when the sun rose on the dismayed and affrighted clan, the island of their destinies was lost beneath the waves.”

“ The Coles seem fully alive to the consequences of a second submersion,” said the Captain ; “ but their precautions are more in accordance with the genius of the nineteenth century. They seem to have trusted less to prayer, and more to brick and mortar. There is a good strong wall built now round the holy island.”

“Yes,” said the Parson, “we keep our superstitions, while we cast away the faith that produced them. I remember making some foolish observation to poor Tommy Maguire about it, and asking him if he did not mean to get his friends to make a breach in the wall, in case of any promising rise of the river. I cannot say but that I felt myself rebuked by his grave reply,—‘Whenever it pleases the Almighty that the Maguires shall get their own again, it is not the Coles’ wall that will keep the waters out.’”

“There certainly is a very curious mixture of deep and earnest faith, with all their superstitions, and with most of their vices,” said the Captain, gravely. “Well, Paddy is a very queer animal, and there is a great deal of good in him. But, heavens and earth! what is this?” said he, interrupting himself. “Why the Squire has caught a fish. Look at that scoundrel, Pat Gallagher, holding it up to us in triumph as he goes over the bridge. Why it’s not possible. I will not believe it.”

But it was possible; and Pat, happy and triumphant, crossed over to the island, hold-

ing it up by the tail, followed by the Squire with the great rod on his shoulder.

“ Did not I tell your reverence that we’d catch the fish to-day ? ”

“ Honestly, now, ” said the Captain, “ have you had no secret ambassador at the fish-house ? ”

“ Honestly, I caught this fish myself at Earl’s Throw, ” said the Squire ; “ and had another rise, besides, at Mois Ruah. I cannot account for it myself. I never saw any thing like it before ; and when I left you, and went down the river, I had as much hope of catching a fish as I had of catching an elephant. It is a fine white fish, too ; eleven pounds good, and just out of the sea : you may see the salt-water lice on him still : and a capital fight he made, for the water there is going down like a mill-sluice. ”

“ By George ! I wish I had gone, ” said the Captain.

“ It would be no good for your honour to go, ” said Pat ; “ sure it was not to your honour that the dream was sent. ”

“ O ho ! I had forgotten, Squire ; you are a favourite of Queen Mab’s. ”

“I am afraid, under these circumstances,” said the Parson, “you will not be induced to listen very favourably to our proposal. We talk of going to Lough Derg to-morrow.”

“Why, to tell you the truth, I should like to give my fly a fair trial; and I cannot do that when the water begins to clear, and your flies catch as well as mine.”

“Well, as we are not favourites of the fairies,” said the Parson, “I do not see why we should not go. You, Pat, would like to stay and see after your fly. So, Squire, if you will spare us M’Gowan you may keep him. M’Gowan pulls a better oar, and he and Slievan will be quite enough for us.”

“Agreed,” said the Squire. “And now to dress for dinner. I will say, that that Anne is the queen of cooks, and deserves all the love the Captain bestows on her.”

“In all my fishing experience,” said the Parson, “I never fared so well as we do at Mother Johnstone’s, worthy old soul that she is.”

“She is not unlikely to give us an extra good dinner to-day,” said the Squire; “she

always does on bad days, by way of consoling us."

"You have deprived yourself of that plea, Squire, by catching that fish. Pat, you rascal, have him up to the kitchen at once. The chances are we have nothing but eels for dinner to-day. No one could catch a trout unless the fairies had favoured him."

"By the bye, Squire, what do you call the new fly?"

"We have not given it a name yet," said the Squire. "What do you say to the 'Fairy-fly?' Rather a pretty name, is not it?"

"Ah, now, your honour, the good people do not like you to talk about their gifts."

"Well, then, considering the sort of day we made it on, I should say, 'Foul-weather Jack' would do very well."

"'Foul-weather Jack' it is," said Pat, reverently, pouring a tin cup full of whisky over it.



## CHAPTER VII.

### LOUGH DERG.

The North Shore of Lough Erne — Pettigoe — Cold Welcome — Irish Inns — Irish Character — A sad Mistake, and its Remedy — Purgatory — Bad Success of the English Church in Ireland and elsewhere — Causes of this — Remedy suggested — Foraging — Scenery of Lough Derg — Fishing — a Calm — Birds'—nesting extraordinary — Swiss Legislation — Legends true and false — The March of the Dead Maguires — Inglis — his Inaccuracies — Causes of them — An “intelligent Guide” — Another “intelligent Guide” — Lord Palmerston's Estates in Ireland — Legend of Bosham Bell — Night Fly-fishing — Return to Belleek.

AT five o'clock the next morning, the expedition left the inn-door by the road that leads to Enniskillen on the north shore of the lake. Although there were but four individuals composing it — namely, the Parson, the Captain, M'Gowan, and Slievan — yet, by the advice of the Parson, both cars

were put into requisition, for the sake of greater speed as well as greater comfort; it having been previously ascertained that the Squire intended to study the philosophy of fishing among the home throws, and to keep the Scholar with him.

The Captain, who evinced a strong desire to be in two places at once, had been down to the river, casting a wistful look at the water; but as it was still hopelessly stained, and had run off much less than had been expected, he came back with an air of content and decision, as if he had succeeded in satisfying himself that in travelling abroad in search of untried pleasures, he had not inadvertently been leaving the real blessings behind him.

The sky was in far better fishing order than the water. It was evident that the fine weather had now regularly set in. There were clouds, certainly, but not more than a fisherman would desire—high, light, and fleecy. There was a soft breath of air, just enough to ripple the lake; and there was that fine wild freshness of early morning that speaks of hope and promise. Whether in the pleasant business of fishing or in the

graver business of life, it is impossible to be down-hearted on a fine early summer's morning.

“Hurrah, my boys!” said the Captain, as he seized the reins and sprung into his seat; “we’ll have a heavy basket of fish to-day, any how. Up with you, Johnny, and off we go!”

The road to Enniskillen by Pettigoe, though not so pre-eminently lovely as that by the southern shore, is still a very beautiful drive. For the first four or five miles it leads over a succession of hills and dips, and is much more shaded and diversified with trees than most Irish roads; the ash, which is the prevailing timber of the country, and which harmonises well with its character, was now in full beauty.

After passing through the grounds of Castle Caldwell, a spot much more favoured by nature than adorned by art, it emerges from a series of neglected plantations and woods, grown to ruin, on the shores of the lower lake, opening out a fine but rather tame view of its numerous wooded and cultivated islands, and disclosing, though at too great a distance to estimate properly their

quiet beauties, the overhanging hills of the southern shore.

The village or town of Pettigoe is situated at the northernmost point of the lake, about half-way to Enniskillen; it is not built on the water's edge, but on the banks of a little tributary to the lake, a small mountain stream, which, though still somewhat black and discoloured, had already begun to shrink back within the summer limits of its stony channel.

It was not yet seven o'clock when the cars rattled up to the inn-door. Ireland, unquestionably, is a late-rising country: the morning service on Sundays always begins in the afternoon, and it would seem as if everything took its tone from that. The people seem never to realise the fact that the sun gets up in their country before noon. At Belleek the English habits and energy of the fishermen had worked a temporary revolution, but Pettigoe was far beyond the sphere of their influence. It was therefore not without considerable delay, and the strenuous exertions of all hands, that the party was at last furnished with a scanty and insufficient breakfast.

“It was a young trick of ours,” said the Parson, “to start on an expedition so scantily provided. Mother Johnstone so spoils us for everything, that I really did expect a breakfast here. Bother the eggs! they are raw—hardly warmed through.”

The Captain rose, and, throwing the window up, put his head out. “Johnny, my man, go and steal us a saucepan or pot, or something with hot water in it. Faith! if we do not boil the eggs ourselves, we may as well make up our minds to eat them raw. You never do find in any inn in Ireland that attention, and I may almost call it welcome, that you meet with so generally at the smaller inns in England.”

“And for this very simple reason,” said the Parson, “that you never meet with the landlord to give it you. In England a man is not above minding his own business, and everything is comfortable—in Ireland he delegates it to the waiter, and everything is wretched; in England you receive a welcome, because the landlord really is glad to see you—in Ireland you receive no welcome, because the waiter does not care three farthings whether you go or stay. Your Irish



landlord is a very worthy fellow, I have no doubt, and a very jolly companion; but he will never answer your purpose or his own, till he ceases to be too great a gentleman to bring in his bill with his own hands, and to receive your money. People talk about Irish misgovernment: the Irish misgovern themselves, for the curse of the country is that every man of every grade is too much of a gentleman for his business."

"Don't be savage, Parson, though the eggs are raw — were, I should say, for they are well done now; so finish your breakfast, and recover your temper. There are a pretty many comforts to be met with in Ireland, after all, and pleasures too. You have passed a good deal of your time here voluntarily; you should not come into a country and speak ill of it."

"It has good fishing," said the Parson, "certainly; and as for comforts . . . well, I don't know what to say, so Moore shall say it for me:—

‘ ‘ Poor race of men,’ said the Whisky Spirit,  
‘ Dearly ye pay for your primal fall;  
Some comforts of England ye still inherit,  
But the twang of potato is over them all.’ ”

"Come, come," said the Captain, "we must make an end of libelling Ireland and misquoting Moore, if we mean to catch any fish to-day. Hand me over the basket; I should like to fit my flies before we start. Why, what the devil is this? Here, Johnny—Johnny M'Gowan! what made you put this basket into the car? Bring me the other with the fly-books;—that has nothing but damaged flies in it."

"Troth, your honour," said Johnny, "that's the basket your honour told me to put up. Divil a basket is there here besides, barrin the empty ones!"

The Parson whistled.

"Divil the basket was there beside, your reverence, in all the room, and this is the one that Sally guv me."

"This comes of changing one's man," said the Parson; "Pat Gallagher knows every book in my possession, and every fly in my books. Well, Johnny, it is no fault of yours; you would not have left the Squire's tackle behind, I know; and I ought to have remembered that I had not Pat with me."

"I suppose we may as well go back," said the Captain.

“Not quite so bad as that,” said the Parson. “Think how we should be laughed at. We can fit out something: the damaged flies here will give us gut enough for two or three good casting-lines. It is a great pity I took mine off my hat the other day, but the flies were getting thoroughly washed in the rainy weather we have been having. I am sure, though, we shall have enough here. As for the hooks, they will all come in again. There is wax and silk, and here is a penknife. Jump about, Johnny, and see what you can find. Knock down that cock that is strutting about there; he will give us black hackles enough for a twelvemonth. An old drake would be a capital prize. The landrails are in season;—see if you cannot pick up a wing or two. Blessings on the carpet, it has got a hole in it already! besides, a hole or two goes for nothing in Ireland; and here is red worsted, and blue, and brown, and—let me see—yes, yellow to be got out of it. There is a mottled hen, which will give us wings; and if you can get a boy to shoot us a blackbird, or a starling or two, we are fairly set up. Come along, Captain—all hands to work! Send

Slievan here, and you begin by cutting up the old flies."

In half an hour's time each of the fishermen had a casting-line, with one spare one between them, in case of accidents; and as for flies, M'Gowan turned them out as fast as they were wanted. There were black and red buzzes, and palmers with all sorts of coloured bodies, from a couple of unfortunate cocks that were slinking about the yard, as if ashamed of their disfigured necks. There were wall-flies, made of the landrail's wing, and midges from the starling, and big burly bluebottle flies, and two or three other sorts—not very neat, certainly, nor particularly durable, but quite good enough for lake trout in tinged water, with a bright rippling breeze.

"There," said the Parson, as he looped on his stretcher or tail-fly, "that is the use of being able to make flies for yourself. I would never recommend a man to make his own trout-flies; it does not pay in time or money: but he should be able to tie them, so as to know when they are tied properly; and once or twice in his life he will turn his knowledge to good account."

“I do not see but that we are just as well off,” said the Captain, “as if we had brought our flies with us.”

“We have lost some time, though,” said the Parson, “and that is what your fly-makers by the river’s bank never take into account. Happy the man who gets a good fishing morning! He cannot afford to throw it away in making flies, for the chances are that he does not get a morning and an afternoon too in the same day.”

It was with high spirits and renovated hopes that the party set out on foot for the Red Lake. The road, which, after a short time, becomes little better than a footpath, leads at first up the course of the stream, but, soon diverging, begins to wind over a wide and lonely heath. There is no mistaking it, for it is well trodden by the feet of the pilgrims to St. Patrick’s Purgatory, and marked here and there by stations or places for prayer. Indeed it was to the Purgatory that the fishermen had trusted for procuring a boat; for boats are by no means so easily to be obtained on this lake as on Lough Melvin. There are no villages on the shores, and consequently no trade; its islands are



little more than heath-covered rocks, affording no level surface for cultivation; and, besides, it is by no means a first-rate fishing lake. The only boats, therefore, are those employed in the service of the Purgatory; and the priests are rather disposed to limit their numbers, and to secure the two or three that they do possess in a neighbouring island, lest the resolution of the penitents should fail them during their trial, and they should be tempted to desert and leave their penance half-finished.

The season of pilgrimage had hardly yet commenced, and there were not above half-a-dozen men and women collected on the shore when the party arrived. Apparently these people had been waiting there for some time, not being in sufficient numbers to make it worth while sending a boat for them. But the arrival of the fishermen produced an evident commotion on the island; and, after a great deal of confusion and running about, a heavy, clumsy-looking cot, which had been secured to a strong post in the island by a still stronger chain and padlock, was manned by two sturdy rowers, and shoved off from the island shore.

The cot is a rough sort of boat, very much in vogue on Lough Erne. That whole lake is full of islands, some of which are very large, and many cultivated; and thus the cot is as necessary to these aquatic farms as the cart or waggon would be to a farm on shore. It is built somewhat in the form of an elongated table-spoon, with the handle off; it is of the rudest possible workmanship, frequently of unplanned planks nailed together and roughly calked, but without the vestige of a keel.

“This is a queer concern,” said the Captain, as this primitive conveyance neared the shore: “it must have been one of the boats belonging to the ark.”

“Not quite so ancient as that; though I am inclined to think that the aborigines must have borrowed their idea from the Danes, which takes it back to very ancient times. The boat is called a scow everywhere except in this neighbourhood, and that is a regular Danish word.”

“They do not seem much to have improved in their naval architecture since the old days of the Vikings,” said the Captain.

“Don’t you be turning up your nose at

the native manufacture," said the Parson. "If you happen to get a dry cot—rather a rare variety, by the way—you will find it answer a fisherman's purpose better than any description of boat whatever."

"Provided always you have not to pull it yourself," said the Captain.

"You would be surprised if you saw a Lough Erne boat-race," said the Parson: "awkward and clumsy as it seems, if the day should happen to be perfectly still, it is the cot that invariably wins the race; their great, broad, shallow frames seem to slip over the surface without touching it. But the slightest breeze is fatal to them; they drop to leeward as unresistingly as a floating plank. Come, in with you! To-day is just the day to see them to advantage. We will make our bargain as we go across."

There was no difficulty in making the bargain, for the fishermen were by far the best pay of any people who were likely to come to the lake; and an Irishman, even though he be the Charon of Purgatory, loves sport of any kind dearly. Besides, they were by no means sure of another cargo of pilgrims; and if any should by accident

drop in during the day, it was argued that a little waiting on the shore would prove a very salutary exercise of patience, and an excellent preliminary to the more serious business of Purgatory.

Although the Parson had caught fish on the lake—as, indeed, there were few lakes or rivers in those parts in which he had not caught fish—it so happened that neither he nor any other of the party had ever landed on the Island of Purgatory, and considerable curiosity was evinced as they approached it.

This curiosity, however laudable, was not destined to be gratified, because, though strangers are very readily admitted, yet every exercise is immediately put a stop to the moment they approach the island.

There was, however, no sort of difficulty made in showing everything that was to be seen, but really that everything amounted to very little indeed. Two or three lodging-houses for the priests on duty, the servants, and the boatmen, without the smallest pretensions to architecture; three churches, of the roughest and rudest possible construction; a bare room, which was called the prison—and which, indeed, did look something like

an overgrown black-hole — the coppers, in which the water is boiled, which, under the name of wine, forms the principal support of the penitents while performing their penance; two or three nondescript sheds, a few stations for prayer, and a rough stony path constructed for a bare-kneed procession,—and these were all the lions of the place.

“I do not know what I expected to see,” said the Captain, “but I must say I am a little disappointed in this Purgatory. The most uncompromising Puritan could not accuse them of over-decorating their churches.”

“Decorating their churches!” said the Parson; “how on earth could you expect any such thing? Whatever it may be in England, in Ireland the Romish Church is exclusively the church of the poor. Where could their decorations come from? Such things are the offerings of the rich, and are plentiful enough wherever there are rich people, or comparatively rich people, to offer; but these people would tell you, and tell you truly, that, provided we have offered our best, it matters little how poor or how humble the church be;—and they do offer their best. In Ireland we see the Papal Church in its



humblest and rudest dress, — and humble and rude enough it is, certainly.”

“In foreign countries, where it is the church of the rich as well as the poor,” said the Captain, “and where, from the magnificence of the decorations and the beauty of the music, the eye and ear are enlisted on the side of religion, I am not at all surprised that the Romish worship attracts the poor and the unlearned ; it is peculiarly calculated for them : the music and the splendour are to them what picture-books are to children ; they convey the desired impressions by the only avenues that are open in their minds. But how it is, that here, bare and unaided, their Church has sufficient power over their consciences to bring annually thousands to this wretched place, is what I cannot comprehend. We cannot even bring them to church on a rainy day. Does not this look very like their being right?”

“It looks very like their having made it their business to study and provide for the peculiarities of human nature,” said the Parson, “and we should do well if we did so too. We have those enthusiasts among us as well as they ; we neglect ours, and so

they get a roaring preacher, or duck one another in a tub, or else dance and shout for themselves, or blow the candles out and howl in the dark, and call themselves Brionites, or Baptists, or Ranters, or anything else that comes into their heads, and so we lose them. The Papists, wiser in their generation, provide an outlet for such passions, and thus keep their people in the Church, and generally, in the end, bring them back to their senses. Wesley and Loyola were much the same class of minds. We cast out the one from us, and produced a powerful enemy; they found a place and office for the other, and made of him as powerful an auxiliary."

"But do you give these people credit for sincerity?" said the Captain. "I suspect there are plenty of hypocrites among them."

"Of course there are, as, no doubt, there are hypocrites among Protestant Dissenters; but the majority are not hypocrites in either case. A man who, with us, apostatises from the Church, and becomes a conscientious Dissenter, is merely an enthusiast working off his excitement; and that is what these people are doing too, only that their children

will likely enough be brought up honest, sincere, quiet Roman Catholic Churchmen, while our enthusiasts' children must grow up honest, sincere, quiet Dissenters."

"But surely you would not countenance such enormities as this purgatory?" said the Captain. "Dissenters may commit all sorts of absurdities, and, all the time, the Church is not responsible, for they do not belong to it; but the Romish Church is responsible for these things, for it sanctions them."

"I am merely mentioning a fact," said the Parson, "not making a comment. Of course I would not countenance St. Patrick's Purgatory—it is in itself an abuse: but I would nevertheless find, if I could, some outlet to enthusiasm within the Church."

"What do you mean by an outlet to enthusiasm?" said the Captain.

"Why, in our Church at present, we have no safety-valve whatever," said the Parson. "It is all very well for the ordinary run of people; but if a man's religious enthusiasm rises very much higher than two sermons on Sunday, there is no help for it—it must burst the vessel."

"But what on earth would you do? You

could not send people with one grain of sense, intellect, or education, to such places as this."

"No, but I would do precisely what these clever priests do: I would give people something to employ their minds with, under a sense of religious discipline; it should be something useful, if I could find it for them, —schools, missions, tending the sick, evangelising some of our heathenish towns in England: but, useful or not, it should be religious employment. But, in the mean time, I will tell you what I would do, and that instantly. Our people rant with one set of Dissenters one week, with another the next, and then are permitted to come back to the Church just as if nothing had happened: thus it is that they lose all idea that they have been committing a sin. If any of these fellows were to indulge in such vagaries, they might be forgiven, certainly, and received again; but it would first be impressed upon their minds that they had not been doing the most praiseworthy thing in the world, by a short voluntary seclusion here on bread and water being made the condition of their pardon."

“In short, you want a little discipline?” said the Captain.

“To be sure we do. Look at the Romish Church in Great Britain : here in Ireland we find it labouring under every disadvantage — poverty, contempt, ignorance, vulgarity ; and yet our Church makes no head against it. If it holds its own, it is all it does ; while in England, year after year, Rome is gaining ground upon us. These are facts ; and there are but two ways of accounting for them, that I know : no one would be disposed to admit that they owe their success to the superior purity of their doctrines, and therefore they must owe it to the superior system of their discipline. With us, every man does what is right in his own eyes, every parish priest is his own bishop, and every man his own priest. It is like brave but undisciplined hordes contending against an army inferior to them in everything but discipline. Besides, the law compels us to receive the off-scourings of every sect, and to treat them and consider them as Churchmen. If one of these scamps were to be excommunicated by his priest, he would become, *ipso facto*, a member of the



Church of England. How can we but lose ground?"

"What, then, do you imagine would be the result, if, with our doctrines, we possessed the system and discipline of the Romish Church?" said the Captain.

"That in a quarter of a century there would be but one Church in the British dominions, and in four times as long there would be but one Church in the world.\* But come, the people are pretty nearly ready with the boat now. We had better make haste, for the breeze is fast failing us already, and you know what lake-fishing in a calm is."

"Why, to tell you the truth," said the Captain, "I have no great opinion of this day or this water, or I should not have wasted so much time from the grand business of life in looking at those wretched people and talking Church. I have a great idea we shall carry home empty baskets, after all."

"If your honours would stop till the night, I'd engage you would not carry home empty baskets," said one of the boatmen.

\* It should be stated that this was written before the winter of 1850.

“Aye, aye, Pat? How so?”

“Ah, bedad! your honours should see the trout then; for one that rises by day there will be twenty rise at night.”

“I have heard something of this,” said the Captain; “and I vote we stay. We can go poking about these islands, and make a very pleasant, idle, sauntering day on the lake, and, after sunset, try the night fishing till late: for I am sure, the less we see of that inn at Pettigoe the better.”

“But what shall we do for grub?” said the Parson. “We reckoned upon getting back to dinner, and we are not very likely to meet with a public-house on these wild heaths. I am afraid we shall make a day’s fast of it.”

“I do not know that,” said the Captain; “that is my strong point. You go and hurry up those fellows in the boat, while I see what can be done in the commissariat department. I suspect we shall make out better than you imagine.”

The Captain was not far wrong in his calculations; for in ten minutes’ time he returned with his hat full of eggs, a heap of oat-cake on the top of them,—the whole supporting a large lump of excellent butter.

“ I told you so,” said he, laughing ; “ money can do any thing any where, but especially here in Purgatory : it is one of their articles of belief.”

“ Where on earth did you pick up these things ?” said the Parson.

“ I have been quartered in Ireland before now,” said the Captain ; “ and I know the manners and customs of one class of the people better than you do. I have merely saved some half-dozen penitents the sin of breaking their fast on the sly, by furnishing them with means for a fortnight’s drunkenness at Pettigoe, as soon as they are absolved and dismissed. Besides, look here ! Johnny, my man, take these eggs and things from me, and stow them away somewhere or other. Look here ! see what I have elicited from under the petticoats of a pious and highly respectable female : it is a dead secret though, and you shall see only the neck of the bottle till we are fairly afloat. Now, then, be smart with you, all hands, and shove off with the boat, for I am not quite easy in my mind with all these contraband articles about me.”

The heavy, clumsy-looking cot, turned out

to be a far more comfortable boat than it looked; and the fishermen taking their seats, one at each end, devoted themselves to what the Captain called "the business of life."

Lough Derg has certainly been well chosen as a spot of religious penitence and seclusion, for the character of its scenery harmonises well with such a feeling; it is that of wild and gloomy loneliness. There are no trees to be seen, and very little cultivation of any kind. It is surrounded by heavy, round-headed mountains, or rather gigantic hills, covered with heather, which, with its red stalks and purple blossoms, casts a dull, dusky, red reflexion on the water, and gives to the lake its name. There are a few islands besides the Purgatory, and these are not without their beauty; but they are still of the same wild, savage character as the coasts,—rocky, heath-covered, and abounding in myrica and arbutus.

It is in the neighbourhood of these islands that the fish are caught, and round them the boat made its slow circuit, as the fishermen, keeping accurate time, cast, with lines not above twice the length of their rods, the one

to the right and the other to the left of its course.

Lake-fishing with two in a boat is, perhaps, next to cross-line fishing, as severe a trial of temper as any the gentle art affords. The theory of it is easy enough,—the two lines must not be in the air at the same moment ; but in practice it is extremely difficult. A bad cast is made, and the natural desire is to cast again in order to improve it ; a fish rises short, and the fisherman, having struck almost involuntarily, circles his line for another cast. These and twenty similar accidents are perpetually occurring to tempt the fisherman to break his time ; and the result of the two lines flying together in the air is, that they inevitably cross each other's course, and thus roll up the flies into a tangle, which takes from five to ten minutes to unravel. If a man stands this, with the trout rising pretty thick about him, the boat the while drifting him out of their reach, and indulges in no unseemly expressions, he may very safely be pronounced duly qualified to stand any trial that life can afford. A fisherman should be very careful in the choice of his boat-companion.



The Parson and the Captain had passed far too many hours of storm and sunshine together not to be fully acquainted with each other's style of fishing; and no one who saw with what apparent unconsciousness of the other's presence each made his own cast, just as his own line appeared to want it, would have imagined that the whole operation was regulated by an habitual and almost unconscious observation of each other's motions.

There was at first quite success enough to test the goodness of the extempore flies, and though few fish of much more than a pound weight were taken, and those of a dull brown, out-of-season sort of character, as if they, too, were pilgrims doing penance in an uncongenial locality; yet, combined with the novelty of the scene and the fineness of the weather, the fishing afforded quite excitement enough to keep the interest alive.

But the breeze gradually dropped. Large splashes of calm, glazy-looking water appeared here and there, spreading by little and little over the whole surface, while the rises became more and more infrequent, and, before a dozen fish had been caught,

ceased altogether. Slievan had fairly given it up, and was asleep with his mouth open at the bottom of the boat ; and M'Gowan was putting the finishing touches to some buzz-flies which he had been making ever since the boat had left the Purgatory ; the lines were still cast across the water, but lazily and mechanically,—the thoughts of the fishermen were evidently elsewhere.

“What bird is that?” said the Captain, rousing himself.

“Sure it's an aigle!” said the men ; and, for want of something better to do, the whole party stood, sat, or reclined, watching the bird as it hovered uneasily round and round them.

“I should not wonder,” said the Captain, who was a bit of an ornithologist, and in his younger days had been an eminent bird's-nester,—“I should not wonder at all if that bird has a nest, late in the season as it is. Pull out a hundred yards or so, and then lie on your oars, and let us watch her.”

The boat was hardly pulled off the shore, when the bird, having made some three or four circles round the island, as if reconnoitering the ground, dipped suddenly down in

the middle of it, disappearing in a clump of rocks and myrica bushes.

“ There is the nest, you may be sure,” said he. “ Many a bird’s-nest have I taken in my time, but never an eagle’s nest yet.”

There was but little temptation to continue casting out the lines over still water, and all were excited at the thoughts of this new object of pursuit; the boat, therefore, was soon secured to the shore, and all parties dispersed about the island in the search.

It so happened, that the Parson had marked the very clump in which the bird had pitched, and had taken the bearings accurately. Guiding his course by these, he scrambled over huge, loose, mossy stones, so large, so irregular, and so unconnected with each other, that it seemed as if the whole island was a mere stone-heap which the giants had left. Scrambling on all-fours over one of them, he with some difficulty raised his head beyond its edge, and found himself within arm’s length, not only of the nest, but of the bird, which rose suddenly with a shrill, startled cry, and, knocking off his hat in her passage, dashed off, clanging and screaming, to the westward, discovering,

in a rude nest of dry sticks, four dirty white eggs, about the size and shape of a bantam's, only rounder and plumper.

The result of a council of war held upon them was, that they should be subjected to the water-test,—it being a fact well known among birds'-nesters, that an egg that has been sat upon, even for a day, will swim, turning one of its ends uppermost, whereas, the fresh egg sinks to the bottom, and lies on its side. The eggs, in this instance, did not stand the test; and as they were unfit for preservation, they were carefully replaced in the nest, and the eagle was permitted to hatch them out,—the Parson taking, as *spolia opima*, one of them, which happened to be addled.

The party then adjourned to a neighbouring island for their dinner,—a measure adopted not less for their own comfort, than for that of the disconsolate eagle.

Thanks to the Captain's successful foraging, the dinner was plentiful, though after all it was but an extempore affair, and was soon dispatched; and the water offering no very great temptation, the party lounged about the island, whiling away the afternoon

in talking, smoking, or sleeping, as best suited their genius and inclinations. The two fishermen were seated on a projecting rock, with their feet hanging over the water.

“If ever an otter is admissible,” said the Parson, “it is so on such a lake as this. You certainly never get a day’s fair fishing here.”

“That is what people always say whenever they happen to have a bad day’s sport,” replied the Captain; “they protest against the otter generally, but think that an exception ought to be made in their own particular case. My opinion is, that it ought to be contraband altogether; it is merely drawing upon principle. A man gets a good day’s fishing with it, if such clumsy work can be called fishing, and this lasts just till the fish are up to it, and no longer; after which it turns out that he has made the fish shy, spoiled his own sport, and ruined that of his neighbours entirely. If I had my will, every otter-fisher should be solemnly ducked; and I would begin with the Squire.”

“They do that same, I am told, on some of the Scotch lakes,” said the Parson.



“ So they do on some of the lakes in the south of Ireland (Inchiquin for one), and I wonder they do not on all,” said the Captain. “ But this is a matter in which the legislature ought to interfere. They manage these things better abroad. When I was in Switzerland, in the year 1846, a rascally Englishman launched his otter on the lake of Thun. For a week or so the people all turned out to see the sight ; but they soon had the sense to discover, that if the fish were so caught and so shied, they would immediately lose one very profitable class of English travellers, the fishermen. So they sent round the bellman, or whatever other means they take for summoning together their trumpery parliament, made the affair a cabinet question, passed the bill with a speed that would shame our people at Westminster ; and the next morning our ingenious Englishman was civilly informed, that another day of this particular kind of fishing would provide him with board and lodging for a month in the town gaol, at the expense of the state of Berne.”

“ Well, I really wish our own legislature would condescend to follow this august example,” said the Parson.

“And as parliament is usually dead slow,” added the Captain, “it is much to be wished that Paddy, in the meanwhile, would take the affair into his own hands: he is just the boy to do it well.”

“I do not think even Paddy could do much in protecting this lake,” said the Parson: “it is so lonely, that a man might fish for a month here without being seen. The whole place looks as if the fairies were its sole inhabitants.”

“I should think that the fairies who belong to this lake must be of the decidedly serious class,” said the Captain.

“It is quite true,” said the Parson, “that the legends of every locality take their tone from the character of the scenery, and that in so great a degree, that a person acquainted with the place would always distinguish a true legend from a fabrication. There would be an incongruity in the latter,—a want of character. It would be as if an artist, painting this landscape, thought fit to decorate these islands with elms or beeches. You would see at once, from the character of the scenery, that the thing could not be,—it would be *out of character*. In nine cases

out of ten, the legend is simply an attempt made by an unlettered, but imaginative people, to account for natural appearances by supernatural agency ; therefore the natural appearances must exist."

" I understand you," said the Captain : " you mean, for instance, that when the charitable monk is said to have crossed the Erne on a supernatural pathway, there must be a pathway of some sort to account for the legend."

" Exactly so," said the Parson. " We, with our knowledge, can account for that pathway, by the very natural solution, that the *débris* washed down by the river in its furious passage from Belleek to Clogh-or must settle as soon as they have cleared the gorge, and are carried into stiller water ; and wherever they do settle there will be a ford. But, in earlier times, men were ignorant of the doctrines of specific gravity, and had recourse to the supernatural ; hence the Ballagh na Monach.

" Or again, the other day, when the weather fell so calm at Lough Melvin, the Scholar, a stranger to the place, was struck at once with the resemblance of that reef of

rocks to a ruined bridge. Had he seen the moon shining along it, the resemblance would have been stronger. Hence the legend. Had there been no such resemblance, there would have been no such legend: had that resemblance existed in this lake, the legend would have been of a darker and gloomier character."

"This lake has its legends, I suppose?" said the Captain.

"Of course it has," said the Parson; "and of course they take their tone from its scenery. I will tell you one that is peculiarly characteristic; it is called 'the March of the Dead Maguires.' The lake is, as you see, of a rounder form than most lakes; and whether it is from that cause, or whether there is anything peculiar in the shape of the hills that surround it, I do not know, but in certain winds there is a heavy roller of a wave that runs along its shores, and looks as if it were sweeping round and round the lake, setting all the reeds and bulrushes in motion, and dragging, as it were, the great beds of lake-weed after it.

"Now the legend is, that the great Maguire, of whom I told you last night,

when he saw his island sunk, took it as a sign of Heaven's displeasure ; and giving up all thoughts of resistance, dispersed his clan, and retired with a few faithful followers to Lough Derg. His intention was to pass the remainder of his life in the religious seclusion of the Purgatory ; but whether he had been rejected by the church, or whether he had committed any particular crime, or whether a peculiar mode of purgation had been prescribed to him, I do not know, but, as he crossed the lake, a furious tempest arose, and he and his people were overwhelmed in the dark waters. And it is said that, from that time to this, whenever any misfortune threatens Ireland, the dead Maguire winds his ghostly bugle, and summons to his train not only those of his own clan who fell in the wars or perished afterwards in the horrible massacres of Cromwell, but also all those of his name who have died in arms against the Sassenagh from time immemorial ; and the whole train of spirits, thousands upon thousands, each in the dress and arms of its own century, march round and round the lake under its waters, heaping up the waves before them, and leaving traces of their pass-



age in the broad stains of blood among the trampled weeds."

"I wonder," said the Captain, "what the great Maguire says about the agitators of the present day? One would think they must cost the poor fellow many a weary tramp. But how on earth do you pick up all these stories? People never tell them to me."

"Because you laugh at them," said the Parson. "An Irishman is very sensitive to ridicule. Perhaps he has a secret consciousness that some of these stories of his require a little faith in the hearer, and he will not subject his cherished belief to the test of an unfriendly one. One thing is quite certain, —if you ask an Irishman a direct question about any thing, you will not get a direct answer. Did I never tell you about Inglis and his book?"

"No," said the Captain. "I have read his book, and a nice, pleasant, lively, well-written book it is, but singularly inaccurate whenever you come to detail."

"And well it may be," said the Parson, "and I will tell you how it happens that it is so. In the course of his travels Master Inglis

comes to Ballyshannon, and asks for an intelligent guide to show him the country. You will agree with me, that he could hardly have found a more intelligent fellow than the man he got—our friend Pat Gallagher, no less. I was talking to Pat about it the other day.

“ ‘He got out a big pocket-book,’ said Pat, ‘and he cut his pencil, and he sat down on a rock stone, and asked me about the priests, and the rents, and the crops, and the landlords, and what-and-all besides. I never saw such a divel for asking.’

“ ‘And what did you tell him, Pat?’ said I.

“ ‘O, the divel a word of truth did he get from me, your riverence.’

“ ‘Why, you don’t mean to say that you let him put down a parcel of stuff that was not true?’

“ ‘Troth, an’ he did then, your riverence.’

“ ‘And why on earth could you not tell him the truth?’ said I.

“ ‘Ah! Who would be the fool, then?—how would I know what he’d be after?’

“ ‘But what *did* you tell him?’ said I, laughing; for I was mightily tickled at the

idea of Inglis's describing from personal observation, as he calls it, the manners and customs of the Irish.

“ ‘ Why, then,’ said Pat, ‘ I disremember me just the particular lie that I told—it was just the first that came into my head.’ ”

“ Well,” said the Captain, laughing, “ at all events Paddy ought not to complain of being misrepresented by the Sassenagh, if that is the way he misrepresents himself. Poor Inglis evidently did his very best to get genuine information, it is not his fault that he did not get it.”

“ Yes, but no bookmaker can take the right way to get it,” said the Parson; “ he cannot find time. You are not going to pick up accurate information by galloping along a turnpike-road, and asking questions right and left of you. With respect to Inglis, though, I am afraid a graver charge lies against him. He started on his travels with a strong Whig bias, and put leading questions, and you know that you may get any Irishman to tell any lie you please out of mere civility. He is just the boy for a leading question. The Squire once made a bet with me that he would, within ten

minutes, make the same man say that the same place was five and fifteen miles off, when we knew its distance to be ten ; and he won it. So it was with Inglis. You know that wretched estate of Lord Palmerston's, that I pointed out to you on the road from Sligo to Ballyshannon. Some years ago I was positively taken to that estate, by way of showing me the extreme of misery which the curse of absenteeism inflicts on a country. Well, you may judge of my surprise when, some time afterwards, I took up Inglis's book, and found this very place lauded up to the skies, and contrasted with Haslewood — another estate near Sligo, the property of a resident landlord, Mr. Wynne, — the owner of which was described as 'one of those short-sighted landlords.' Now, I do not know much about farming, but as Mr. Wynne's country had always seemed, to my inexperienced eyes, to be more like England than anything I had seen in Ireland, I really was a little astonished. Some time after, on passing through Sligo again, I discovered the solution. Inglis had begun his system of cross-examination and leading questions — ' Was

not Lord Palmerston very popular here?’ ‘Was not his domain in fine order?’—‘Was not he an excellent landlord?’ and so forth; and then sallied forth with his ‘intelligent guide’ to judge with his own eyes as before. His intelligent guide, who had not exactly expected this, was a little taken aback; and being pretty well aware that Lord Palmerston’s estate would not pass muster, took him to the next estate, and showed him a nice little village which had just been built on the side of Benbulbin by my old friend and schoolfellow, Sir Robert Gore Booth. Inglis might have said, and with very great justice too, that the landlord of that village was, if not the best, at least one of the best landlords in the land; but this, as Sir Robert was a wicked Tory, would have suited neither Inglis’s purpose nor that of his intelligent guide, whose object was to procure him the peculiar sort of information he was so anxiously seeking. So the guide suppressed names, but went on examining the people, and helping Inglis to elicit all sorts of praise of their *landlord*, which in truth their landlord fully deserved—all this was carefully



logged down in Inglis's pocket-book to Lord Palmerston's account, and afterwards appeared as such in print."

"Well, but who can guard against a man who takes you out and tells you deliberate and very ingenious lies?" said the Captain.

"*Vult decipi et decipitur*," said the Parson; "he looked for a lie, and he found it. You will always do that in Ireland; the people are but too happy to have the chance."

"It is a pity poor Inglis died," said the Captain. "Lord Palmerston could have done no less for so thick-and-thin a supporter than give him a jolly good situation in the Foreign Affairs."

"He would have made a first-rate ambassador," said the Parson; "he was just the fellow to 'lie abroad for the good of his country.'"

"I do not think you would be very likely to fall into such a scrape yourself," said the Captain. "Paddy's false stories would not have passed current with you. But how did you get at the true ones?"

"I got my legends simply by pretending to believe them."

“ The Squire says you do believe them.”

“ In that case, the professing to do so is all the more easy,” said the Parson. “ The truth is, I am a half-believer. I do not exactly disbelieve any one of them, and this our followers soon find out. My key to all the legendary lore of this country was a legend that I picked up in my own ; and as this bears all my marks of a true legend, being strictly local in its scenery, and accounting for a natural phenomenon by supernatural agency, I may as well give it you as an example :—

“ At the upper end of a winding, shallow tide-harbour, on the coast of Sussex, stands the ancient church of Bosham, one of the very few remains of genuine Saxon architecture still extant. Bosham is now little better than a fishing-village, but in the days of Canute, who built a splendid palace there, it had a flourishing monastery, in the vaults of whose church that king’s daughter lies buried. At that time, and under the eye of a king whom history describes as not to be humbugged, the monks, no doubt, were models of propriety ; but a hundred years or so before those happy days (*humanum est*

*errare*), they were, like true Saxons, a little too much given to remember the feast-days of Mother Church, but not quite so diligent in observing the fasts and vigils ; and accordingly St. Nicholas, under whose patronage they had hitherto prospered—(you need not laugh : there is a St. Nicholas, and he is the guardian of sailors, and has nothing to do with the other gentleman below),—well, this St. Nicholas, not altogether approving of their goings on, was pleased to send them a little wholesome castigation, in the appropriate shape of a shipful of piratical Danes, who, being worshippers of Thor and Odin, had, as may be supposed, very little reverence for the sanctity of the place, and, in fact, made a pretty general clearance of the whole monastery.

“ Among other articles of plunder, they carried with them the pride and wonder of the whole country—the great tenor bell. These misfortunes seem to have brought the erring fraternity to their senses, for they betook themselves forthwith to their disused breviaries, praying heartily to St. Nicholas, while the seven remaining bells rang out the very best backward peal they could get

up in the absence of their lamented tenor. The ship had already set sail, and, under the influence of a favourable breeze, had already proceeded about a mile down the harbour, when the melancholy peal struck up. Strange to relate, the tenor bell began to sink and sink through the decks; and when the frightened heathens ran below, they found it sinking through the very flooring itself, though the floor-planks and timbers closed in of themselves as it passed through them, and did not suffer a drop of water to enter. Down sank the bell, and down and down to the bottom of the great bell-hole, which remains to this day perfectly round and distinct,—a constant memorial, even to our own times, that St. Nicholas, though for his own good reasons he saw fit to punish his neglectful servants, yet would never suffer a baptized bell to fall into the hands of the heathen.

“ The most wonderful part of the story remains to be told. Ever since that fatal day, even down to our own times, whenever a peal is rung from Bosham tower, the lost tenor chimes in with her sister-bells; and any one standing at the brink of the bell-

hole can, to this day, hear plainly and distinctly the whole octave peal."

"And this is the sort of story wherewith you humbug the natives?" said the Captain.

"It is no humbug at all," said the Parson. "The legend of the bell-hole in Chichester Harbour is as I tell you; and as for the lost tenor, I have heard it myself."

"Bravo, Parson! the Squire was not far wrong."

"Stop a moment," said the Parson. "I said that this story bore all the marks of a true legend: it is strictly local,—that is to say, it will fit no other place in the world. There is at the confluence of Chichester Harbour and Bosham Creek that curious whirlpool. There are, no doubt, natural causes why it should be so round and deep—deeper, in fact, than the rest of the harbour; but these causes are not evident. Moreover, if you stand there when the bells are ringing, you do hear the octave bell, which bell does not now exist in the Bosham peal, and which, tradition says, was taken from them by the Danes. Now remember, what I call a true legend is an attempt made by an imaginative people to account



for a local and natural phenomenon by means of supernatural agency. It is a musical fact, that if you strike the third and fifth at the same time in full holding notes, they will produce, besides their own tones, the octave also. Now the woods of Itchenor, on the opposite side of the harbour, are so disposed, by the natural sweep of the ground, as to throw back a perfect echo to the bell-hole ; and, consequently, whenever the true tone of the third bell crosses the echoed sound of the fifth, the octave, or lost bell, sounds also, and, of course, it is heard at the bell-hole, and nowhere else. Now this legend, which I really consider a valuable one, is the key that has unlocked to me the supernatural history of the Erne. I told it to Pat one sunny day, when we were obliged to give up fishing (of course, without the philosophical explanation), and it opened his heart at once. I was no longer the sneering heretic, but a true believer. Then and there I was presented at the court of the Erne Fairy King, and from that time forward have I been partaker in the innermost secrets of his cabinet."

By this time there began to be a stir

among the boatmen, the sun had been for some while under the horizon, and the shades of evening were adding solemnity to the landscape. There was not a breath of wind, and the surface of the lake, which even yet retained its dull, red glow, became still and dark as a sheet of copper. The rods, which hitherto had been pitched in the turf by their spikes, were removed into the boat, together with the miscellaneous articles of the encampment, and Johnny M'Gowan came up with a smiling and hopeful countenance.

“The boatman says, says he, the night will do iligant.”

“The sooner we are off, the better,” said the Captain, jumping up and hastening to the boat, which had been launched, and lay floating beside a rock.

But if the Captain was in a hurry, the boatmen were not ; everything was done slowly and deliberately for the purpose of whiling away the time, and it was nearly dark when they arrived at a part of the lake where the shallowness of the water, and the sandy nature of the bottom, appeared to their experience as suited to the spot.

But the surface here was just as dark and unmoved as that of any part they had visited. It seemed as if neither trout nor living animal of any kind was ever to be found beneath it.

"Their honours had better take off the drop flies," said the boatman; "a tangle by this light would spoil the sport."

"I think I shall take off one of them," said the Parson; "but in calm weather like this, I am not much afraid of entangling my flies by day or night."

"I suppose the proper fly for this work would be the white moth," said the Captain. "Bother that fellow for leaving the books behind. I have plenty of them, and have never had the chance of using one yet."

"I believe the white moth is a regular humbug," said the Parson, "though you see it in every man's book—not but what it would catch by night, or anything else that the fish can see; but white is the very worst colour that you can show at night, because it is the most invisible against the sky, which is the position in which the fish see it. Black is the colour; and, strange to say, you

cannot fish with too small a fly—the white moth is many sizes too large.”

“And here’s a dodge worth knowing,” said the Captain, who had measured out twenty feet of line, and then tied a piece of white silk round that part of the reel-line which was just under his thumb. “In ten minutes’ time we shall not be able to see the tops of our rods, and it may be useful to know how much line one has out.”

“But, Paddy, my man,” said the Parson, “I do not see any trout here.”

“Wait a bit, your honour, I’ll engage we see them.”

And wait they did for another half-hour ; while the glow of their respective pipes and cigars showed out plainer and plainer as the night grew dark.

“By heavens! there are those rascally swans flapping their wings and cleaning themselves,” said the Captain. “It is all up with us now.”

“It’s the throut, your honour,” said the boatman.

“Sure enough it is,” said the Parson, who had been craning over the boat’s side with his eye close to the water, and looking

along the surface so as to bring the horizon behind the object. "They are dotting the whole lake like a hail-storm. Shove us half-a-dozen yards more to the eastward. That will do." And he cast at the sound "Hurrah! That is in him!" as the chattering reel announced a capture.

"And that is in him, too," said the Captain; "and a precious big one mine is."

The difficulty now was to prevent the two fish from crossing the lines, which would have ensured the escape of both, and the loss of more valuable time than they could spare, especially as both lines were somewhat imprudently garnished with droppers. But the Parson's fish being a small one, was soon secured; and, without waiting the result of the Captain's battle, his line was again cast out towards the sound of another rise.

If it is impossible to treat a big fish at night with the same care and ceremony of playing and giving line which he expects to receive by day; so also is it less necessary, for there is no such thing as a fish breaking his hold. The night-rise of the trout is as different from the same operation performed in the daylight, as one thing can be to an-



other. In the daylight it is a quick, startled snatch, like a boy who picks a pocket and runs away ; by night it is a calm, deliberate smack. The fish lies at the surface, with the top of his back out of water ; and, on seeing a fly, impels himself calmly towards it with a slow wave of his tail, and, opening his mouth with a sound that resembles a hearty kiss more than it does anything else, sucks it completely into his gullet. The difficulty is to recover the fly after the fish is landed, not to make it hold.

In the present instance there was little fear for the tackle, which, being composed of the gut of damaged salmon-flies, was much stronger than would on any other occasion be used for trout. The only difficult manœuvre was the application of the landing-net, which, as it was altogether out of the question to see the line, required some care and contrivance. The fish, when a little tired, was brought to the surface and made to splash the water. This, of course, was easily seen by the attendant, and the net was insinuated carefully under him.

For somewhat more than half an hour did they catch as fast as they could throw ;

and these not the little fish that had been rising during the day, but the patriarchs of the flood. The very smallest weighed down a pound and a half, while the large ones would come hard upon four or even five pounds. The baskets were getting full; when suddenly—just as suddenly as it had begun—the sound of rising ceased, the lake was as still as before, and the fish seemed to have retreated by word of command, and sought the depths below.

“We’ll catch no more now,” said the boatman, “till maybe one or two in the morning.”

“And I do not think it will be worth while to wait for that,” said the Captain. “The Squire cannot laugh at us now with such baskets as we shall bring home; and though this night-fishing is a thing one would like to experience once in one’s life, it is nothing like fishing by day-time, when you see your enemy and your enemy sees you.”

“Yes,” said the Parson, as the old cot sprung forward under the hearty efforts of all hands, “it is well enough to catch big fish; but this mode is open to the meanest

capacity, and I cannot but think it is taking a dirty advantage over them."

It was much too dark for any one to see where they were going, so that it seemed more by instinct than anything else that the boat touched the shore at the very spot where they had been taken in that morning. The boatmen, paid off, returned to spend their evening in Purgatory, while the remaining four picked out, as best they might, the pilgrim's track to Pettigoe.

This task was soon rendered less difficult by the rising of the moon, which, though six days past its full, threw quite sufficient light, not only to direct their steps, but also to reveal once more, under a different aspect, the wild beauties of the place.

A new light also dawned in the Captain's mind. "I do not see," said he, "why we should stop in this horrid little village, when we might sleep comfortably at Mother Johnstone's. Let us have out the cars. There is quite light enough now ; and if we cannot rouse out the people at Belleek, I will engage to get in by the window."

"Upon my word, that would not be a bad plan," said the Parson. "We cannot get at

the stable, I know ; but if we take a couple of feeds of corn with us and turn the horses out in the meadow, they will be much obliged to us, and Johnny can sleep at Pat's house : so that is all settled."

And so it was ; for the next morning the Johnstone family, who, taking advantage of the fishermen's absence, had returned to their ancient slumbers, were startled from their morning's sleep by the Captain's well-known call,—

" Why, Sally, you have not got any water ready for shaving yet ! "

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A WELL-SPENT SUNDAY.

A Surprise—Cockburn's Hotel—Streets of Ballyshannon on a Sunday—The Court-house—Examinations—Cross-examinations.

IT was so much the custom for the fishermen to congregate on Sundays at Ballyshannon, that the Parson, on turning out in the morning, the day after the Lough Derg expedition, was in no way surprised to hear that the Squire and Scholar, after fishing their way down the river on the preceding evening, had not returned to Belleek; and that, in consequence, he and the Captain were now sole tenants of the inn.

Most of the fishermen, indeed, had relays of clothes and dressing apparatus at Cockburn's Hotel, and occasionally dined or slept there, as caprice or convenience dictated. The place is not so central, nor so handy



to the best fishing as Belleek, nor, it must be admitted, was the cookery anything at all approaching to that of the incomparable Anne: but it was a *bonâ fide* hotel; it boasted a coach-house, where the Squire's carriage was reposing; its rooms were of a towny and hotellish character; its tables were of mahogany, though dull; and its forks were of silver, though dirty; its bedrooms had four-post beds, with testers and curtains, and real live bugs, and everything complete, like a Dublin hotel: it had a male waiter, and a boots, and an hostler, with a bell for each of them;—upon the whole, it was a very grand affair, and, no doubt, turned up its nose immensely at its cosy, comfortable, unpretending, pot-house-looking competitor at Belleek.

It had long been the Squire's custom to hold there a sort of weekly levy. There was a standing invitation to every fisherman on the Erne, or its vicinity, and that, equally whether he was previously known to any of the party or not, to dine at Cockburn's on Sunday; and thus it seldom happened that on that day a smaller party than eight or ten sat down to table.

It had been the intention of the Parson and the Captain, on their return from Lough Derg, to remain at Belleek during the day, and to walk over to Ballyshannon quietly in the evening; to hear the news, sleep there, and to fish back to their old quarters on the Monday following; but their movements were somewhat unexpectedly accelerated by unforeseen circumstances.

“What on earth is in the wind now?” said the Captain, as he ran up the stairs into the common room, where the Parson was still hunting about in his portmanteau for some missing articles of Sunday wear—“here is a messenger hot foot from Ballyshannon, with a note from the Squire, desiring us to lose no time, but to join him there as soon as possible.”

“Does he give no reason?” said the Parson.

“He says there has been a devil of a shindy,” said the Captain; “but there is nothing very strange in that on a Saturday night. But look at his note; it is nothing but a pencil scrawl, written in great haste, and sent without seal or direction.”

“But where is the messenger?”

“The man seemed in furious haste himself; he just gave the note to Wee Fanny, whom he met at the door, and was off like a shot.”

“By George, it is Hector’s nets,” said the Parson. “I always thought we should hear more of that. Did you not see the men looking at each other significantly the other day at the Upper Rapids, when you were telling that story about the Killarney weirs? I thought they meant mischief. The fact is, one soon gets to consider one’s attendant as a part of one’s self. Really we ought to take care how we throw such fire-brands about among such a combustible people.”

“To tell you the truth,” said the Captain, “if Hector’s nets are destroyed, I for one think he deserves it richly; it was a mere piece of legal poaching, under cover of a flaw in the Act of Parliament! Hang the fellow, I hope they have not left him a net in the world. Besides, he is nothing more than the agent; he will not be hurt; and touching their pockets is the only way you can speak to a company’s feelings.”

“Well, I will not say you are wrong in

your argument; and really, what I am most anxious about is, lest the boys should have got themselves into a scrape, for Hector certainly has the law on his side."

"Yes," said the Captain, "they have divided the law and the justice between them, each party taking his own; and, as you say, Hector has got the law. But are you not ready yet? I want to be there."

On that Sunday forenoon the town of Ballyshannon presented as un-Sunday like an appearance as a town well might. Service was just over at the church when the Parson and Captain arrived at Cockburn's; but church and chapel had alike been without their congregation, though the people were for the most part dressed in their Sunday's best. Groups of men were standing in little knots here and there, talking eagerly and sharply, though in under-tones; women were peering from doors and windows, looking anxiously up and down the street; now and then a green policeman would walk rapidly across with a quick step and business-like countenance; while a horseman would gallop up to the steps in front of the hotel, shout for the hostler like a man of

authority, deliver a brief and mysterious message, and gallop back no one knew whither.

“Why, Squire,” said the Captain, as they reached the steps, and found him and two or three other fishermen, with eager and anxious countenances, in deep council on the platform at the top, “what is the matter now? Another rising?”

“Yes, and a pretty effectual one this time,” said the Squire. “Not a stake—not a net remaining; all as clean as a new-mown field.”

“Well, I hate half-measures,” said the Captain.

“Of course, one is very sorry that there has been a breach of the peace, and all that, you know,” said one of the fishermen; “but as they have done it, and it cannot be helped, I hope they have thrashed Hector within an inch of his life.”

“Come, that is not fair,” said the Squire; “the poor devil is only an agent, and a gallant and firm-hearted fellow he is, too, and did his duty well. I cannot say that I am altogether sorry the nets are destroyed, but I am glad the boys seem to have been



more considerate than they might have been with you for their leader."

"Well, well, I did not mean that, exactly; but that the nets are gone is a blessed transaction for us fishermen. How was the thing managed?"

"Nay," said the Squire, "I should ask you Ballyshannoners: I cannot be expected to know so much about it as you do. But the truth is, I can get no satisfactory answer. No one seems to know exactly. There was a good deal of firing, it seems, and the policemen got much the worst of it; but how it was done, or by whom, I can get no one to tell me, and I think no one knows."

"Was any one hit?" said the Parson.

"None of the policemen," said the Squire; "they seem to have fought under cover. Besides, there was not much firing on the side of the attacking party: they must have rushed up and overpowered the police by numbers. I hear, though, that two or three of the boys were knocked over."

"What, killed?" said the Parson.

"Why, I cannot tell you that, either," said the Squire. "I suppose not killed, or there would have been the bodies; but what

became of the wounded men, if any were wounded, I do not know. I have been doing nothing but asking questions all this morning, and I cannot get a satisfactory answer about any one thing. Can it be possible that the people themselves do not know?"

"Come, now we shall hear something about it," said the Parson; "here is the man that can tell us, if any one can," as Pat Gallagher, with his invariable accompaniment, the Parson's gaff, on his shoulder, lounged up the street. Pat was scrupulously clean, and looked particularly tidy, and unlike his weekday-self, dressed as he was in his Sunday clothes. "Here, Pat," continued he, "tell us something about this business. Who are the honest fellows who did that job so cleverly?"

"Divel a know I knows, your riverence," said Pat. "They say it's the boys from county Mayo."

"County Mayo!" said the Squire. "Why how the devil should they come here?"

"Troth, your honour, that's true for you," said Pat.

"Why, county Mayo is forty miles off, is it not?" said the Ballyshannon fisherman.

“Faith and it is,” said Pat.

“Oh, that is nothing!” said the Scholar, who was deeply versed in Irish affairs. “Whenever they want to commit a murder, or anything of the sort, they always send for men from a distance. I am sure you are quite right, Pat; that was a good idea of yours.”

“Sure, it’s the boys that says it,” responded Pat, modestly; “it’s little the likes of me knows about it.”

“Yes, it is quite clear,” said the Scholar; “I have been round the whole town this morning, and asked everybody about it, and no one could give me the least information. The fact is, they knew nothing about it themselves. There can be no doubt but that the rioters are all strangers; and county Mayo is a very likely place for them to come from. I have always known it as a disaffected place.”

“Well, at all events, I hope none of our fellows were there,” said the Parson. “You did not hear of any, Pat?”

“I’ll engage they would not be such fools, then,” said Pat.

Just then a car drove into the town at

speed, and three or four gentlemen alighted from it ; two or three horsemen followed. There was an additional bustle, and a police party, commanded by a sergeant, marched down the street.

“ What is all this row about ? ” said the Parson. “ What are they going to do now ? ”

“ Why, I forgot to tell you that the police have taken some prisoners. As soon as they were set free themselves, they bustled into the town and took up any one they could lay hands upon.”

“ That is what I call real gratitude,” said the Captain.

“ Well, I suppose they thought they must do something for their pay,” said the Squire ; “ and provided some one was hanged, it would not greatly signify who it was.”

“ Then these fellows who came down the street just now must be the magistrates come to investigate the business,” said the Ballyshannoner.

“ What, on Sunday ? ” said the Parson.

“ Oh, people are not over particular here ! And I vote that we follow the fashion of the country ourselves. Let us adjourn to the Town-hall, and see the end of it.”

The court was crowded to excess, but the rank, as well as the popularity, of the fishermen procured them an easy entrance : the people shouldering and pushing each other to give them passage, and the magistrates rising and offering them seats.

The case had been already opened, and the chairman, a stipendiary magistrate, was in the act of examining Mr. Hector, the manager or agent of the fishery, as to the extent of the damage.

It must be confessed that appearances were considerably against the prisoners, as the police-sergeant, with a little extra ostentation, by way of making up for his last night's defeat, paraded them before the bench. They were eight in number ; and their wet clothes, covered with sand and sea-weed, seemed rather difficult to be accounted for, except on the supposition that they had been engaged waist high in some marine occupation. They, nevertheless, boldly asserted their innocence, and looked every one of them so honest and simple-minded, and so unconcerned withal, and so much at their ease, that it really was difficult to imagine that such men as these could



possibly have been engaged in deeds of violence, and were at that moment in imminent danger of transportation.

The confusion incident on the arrival of the fishermen having in some degree subsided, the examination was resumed.

“You have said, sir, I think,” said the Chairman, addressing himself to Mr. Hector, “that your nets, boats, and other gear, have been utterly destroyed, and that your speculation has been thereby utterly and completely defeated?”

“Na, na, your worship, I did na say joost that,” said Hector. “The nets na doot are destroyed, but I am na sic a muckle fule as to be caught with only ae string to my bow. In troth I’ve a bonny set o’ new nets lying at the little toon doon thonder; before I cam here I sent my canny chiels at Kildoney for them, and by this time they are joost petched whar the auld ones stood.”

This piece of information seemed to cause a good deal of dismay throughout the whole court. Even the fishermen could not conceal their blank looks, which evinced anything rather than satisfaction at the prosperous state of Mr. Hector’s affairs; but in

the lower end of the room the indications were more open and unrestrained. There were some angry looks, and a good deal of anxious whispering and running about. Presently the crowd near the door began to thin, the men slipping out one by one ; till at last Hector, suspecting mischief, and having applied for and obtained from the stipendiary such a guard of police as enabled him to set all threats of future attack at defiance, thought it advisable to return forthwith to his remaining property, and to mount his guard at once.

Samuel Gilbert, the sergeant of police, was next called up as witness. He deponed, that about one o'clock that morning the police-barrack had been attacked by a body of at least a hundred men ; that the police, who had been keeping a bright look out, had seen them approaching, and had opened a fire upon them ; that, nothing checked thereby, the people had made a rush, and before the police could reload had surrounded the barrack, and had made them all prisoners ; that they detained them prisoners for several hours, and liberated them finally only when day began to dawn ; that on

being set free, the police had hurried down to Mr. Hector's nets, and had found everything destroyed ; that, in consequence, they had pushed on to Ballyshannon, where they arrived about four o'clock in the morning, when finding the prisoners up at that unusual hour, and seeing their clothes wet and covered with mud and sand, they had considered it their duty to apprehend them.

The Chairman thought that nothing could be more satisfactory and conclusive, and turning short upon the prisoners, asked whether any of them had aught to say against their being forthwith committed to take their trials for the outrage.

Upon this Michael Rowan, assuming the look of conscious innocence, and calling up a countenance half-shrewd, half-silly, that might have baffled a regular Old Bailey lawyer, took upon himself the office of spokesman.

“ May it please your worships,” said he, “ the divel a word but thruth has the honest jintleman spoke — bedad, it is no less. And, be me sowl ! saving your honour's presence, it will be them boys of Mayo who did the job ; bad luck to them, the blackguards !

to bring us dacent boys of Ballyshannon into throble. And will it plase your worships just to condiscind to let me discoorse the Peeler a thrifle?"

The Stipendiary thought this indulgence inadmissible; but the Squire and the Captain, both magistrates on the English bench, and habituated to a somewhat purer administration of justice than was in vogue in Ireland, thought differently; and the Irish county magistrates inclining to the same opinion, the permission asked was granted. On which Micky, turning towards the witness, said,—

“Now, Misther Peeler, just be telling their worships av ye saw me among the boys at the fight.”

“I did see the prisoner,” was the answer returned.

“Och, then, bad luck to you!” cried Micky, utterly confounded for the moment by this reply. But soon recovering himself, he returned to the charge.

“Well now, then, just tell their worshipful honours how it was that you wor surprised and taken prisoners last night.”

“Because it was so dark we could not see the boys coming down upon us.”

“Sure there was a purty moon. Faith, it is asleep ye wor, I’m thinkin.”

“There was no moon!” retorted the witness, highly offended at finding his vigilance called in question.

“Och, murther! no moon, is it? May be it’s swearing that you’ll be?”

“I will,” answered the witness, firmly; “and the Almanac will prove the time. There was no moon last night.”

“Well sure, then, it must have been the many shinin stars, that made it daylight as day.”

“There was not a star to be seen,” replied the witness, rising in anger. The night was cloudy, with a drizzling rain, and so dark you could not see your hand before you.”

“Now, mavourneen! maybe it’s to that you’d be swearin again?”

“I will,” said the witness, resolutely, and with great firmness.

“Bedad! then it’s a mighty iligant pair of eyes you have in your head. Now, then,



just be explaining to their worships, how it was when you could not see the boys at all at all, ye saw me amongst them."

"Well, then, I think I did see you," replied the witness, feeling himself fairly caught in the trap.

"Och! thrue for you, sergeant, and mighty civil into the bargain to give yourself so much trouble about thinkin. But did you *see* me? Will you swear that you did?"

"Well, then, perhaps I did not. I cannot swear that I did."

"And, p'r'aps, you can't swear to them dacent boys standin by me?"

"Well, I will not."

"There, your worships," exclaimed Micky, turning triumphantly to the magistrates, "sure I tould your honours so. It must have been them ghosts that frightened the Peelers, bad luck to them for taking the likeness of Micky Rowan. I hope your worships will now send me about my business."

"Softly, Mister Rowan, softly," said the Stipendiary; "stop a moment, and tell us how you happened to be abroad at the unusual hour of four in the morning."

"Sure, now, your worship, was n't it

watchin all night I was the poor crature of a mother down in the faver? God help her! And wasn't it glad I was, when the poor sowl fell into a sleep, just to step out and take a look at the blessed sun?"

"Indeed!" exclaimed the Stipendiary; "and no doubt these worthy gentlemen, your companions, had been helping you to watch your poor mother, and were equally anxious with yourself to take a look at the blessed sun?"

"They were not, your worship. They were just taking a wash in the say of a Sunday morning, to make themselves clane and dacent for the holy mass; and sure didn't I take a wash at the same time?"

"I dare say you did, Mr. Rowan; and forgot, I see, to take your clothes off."

"Faix, I did not, your worship!"

"Then how came you wet, as you now stand, up to the middle?"

"And sure it was from walking through Pat Sweeny's standing grass, all dripping with the morning dew, your honour. And sure it's poor Pat only that I have offended."

At this moment the Squire whispered across the table, "Upon my word, I begin

to think that we have got hold of the wrong people."

"Not a bit of it, not a bit of it," quickly rejoined the Stipendiary. "Depend upon it, Mr. Michael and all his worthy co-patriots were in the plot."

"But you have not yet got one tittle of evidence to show that they were."

"Never mind about that; we'll have evidence enough. I think they should be committed at once."

The Englishmen smiled. However, the county magistrates took a more favourable view of the case, and overruled the opinion of their chairman, and the prisoners were acquitted and discharged accordingly.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE FALLS OF BALLYSHANNON.

The Great Falls—The Salmon Leap—The Slob-weirs again in Action—Law and Justice not always identical—Course of the Salmon at Sea—Discoveries in their Natural History—Peculiarities in the Nature of Private Property in Fisheries—Reasons for these Peculiarities—Effects of the Discoveries on the Markets—An Irishman always sets himself against the Law—Reasons for this—Real ‘Justice to Ireland’—Foul-weather Jack—The Squire’s Dream comes true—Reade’s Throw.

It was the invariable custom of the fishermen to assemble on Sunday evenings at the Great Falls, whenever the weather permitted. This place was their regular coffee-house or gossip-shop, where the events of the week, the state of the weather, the prospects of the fishing, and other topics of local politics, were discussed. And on the evening of the trial the whole party were

assembled there, including several who, having made Cockburn's their head-quarters, instead of visiting it occasionally like the Squire and his party, were distinguished generally as Ballyshannoners.

They could not well have chosen a more lovely spot. Standing on a level with the river at the top of the fall, you look down over a scarped rock on the estuary into which it empties itself. The height of the rock may be some thirty feet, and the turf which clothes its top is as smooth as velvet. There is a peculiarity in all the rivers of this coast, that they throw themselves into the sea over a ridge of rocks, thus forming a waterfall more or less beautiful according to the quantity of water discharged, and the height from which it has to fall. In the Erne the body of water is considerable, and the height, varying according to the state of the tide, from twelve to thirty feet.

On this particular evening the tide was at its highest, and the salmon, being now best able to master the fall, were in full activity, forcing their entrance into the river. Whatever may be the reason, a salmon seldom attempts this feat singly ; it would appear as



if a whole shoal consulted together, and having agreed upon the fittest moment, advanced to the leap by word of command, a dozen or so being in the air at the same time. Of these, the fish that failed by far exceeded in number those that achieved their object; but, nothing daunted with their fall, the beaten fish would again collect their comrades around them, and again advance to the leap.

It is indeed supposed that the salmon, on leaving the coast and putting to sea, form themselves into regular fleets, under the command of some old and experienced fish, who acts as their admiral; that they continue together during their cruise, trust to the guidance of their leader for again making their port, and separate only on arriving at their respective breeding-grounds. These squadrons of salmon are technically termed schools, and their master-fish the schoolmaster. A man who catches a fish weighing over twenty-four pounds is said to have landed a schoolmaster.

The foot of these falls is a very good throw for trout, hundreds of them being from time to time swept away by the floods and preci-

pitated into the sea. Any fish so swept away become eternal exiles from their river; it is impossible for them to ascend the fall, the leap being quite as much as a salmon can manage; and it is equally impossible for them to leave the spot, as their lungs are unfitted for the salt water: thus the only place where they can obtain a taste of their native element is the foot of the falls, where they congregate in great numbers.

Besides the principal stream, there are two smaller branches, isolating the rock on which the fishermen were assembled. The main river is always left open, so as to give free passage to the fish; this, indeed, is not optional, as the body of water is quite great enough to sweep away any obstacle that might be placed on it. But the latter, which by artificial means are rendered much more easy of access, are secured by boxes, in which, with the assistance of some nets below, two or three tons of fish are frequently taken during the twenty-four hours, seldom less than half that quantity; and generally as much as eighty, a hundred, or even a hundred and twenty tons, during their three months' season.

The nominal object of the meeting was to see the salmon take the leap, which indeed is a sight at once extraordinary and beautiful; but no point could be chosen from which the river appears to greater advantage on a still, bright, unclouded evening. Behind is the great pool of Ballyshannon, surrounded by the buildings of the town, and alive with sporting salmon; in front the splendid estuary, lake-like and glittering in the setting sun. This extends for five or six miles, bounded on the south by the picturesque sandhills near Bundoran, and on the north by the wild shores of Kildoney, the scene of the recent exploit, while in the far distance appears the bold promontory which marks the entrance to the bay of Donegal; to the southward of this the view is terminated only at the imaginary line where the sky and sea seem to unite.

The Squire was seated on the turf at the edge of the fall. He had planted his gaff firmly in the ground, and was steadying against it a pocket telescope, with which he was reconnoitering carefully the scene of the last night's attack.

“That is a smart fellow that Hector,”

said he ; “ he has got every net regularly pitched again already. There is the back line glittering in the sun, and the stakes all right again, with the tide bobbing and rippling against them, just as usual. These poor fellows have got themselves into trouble for nothing, I am afraid ; the coast is just as much blockaded as ever it was.”

“ How one adopts the feelings of the country,” said the Parson. “ I cannot help siding with those fellows. I enjoyed Micky’s triumph over the sergeant as much as any one.”

“ And why the devil should not you ?” said the Squire.

“ Why, it was a breach of the laws and a destruction of property,” said the Parson. “ Hector’s nets ruin the river, and I wish they were a step beyond Connemara ; but he has a great right to put them there.”

“ A legal right or a moral right ?” said the Squire.

“ Both,” said the Parson. “ He has a legal right, because the Act of Parliament does not forbid it ; and he has a moral right, because he has made a discovery in

the natural history of the salmon, and has a right to profit by that discovery. I cannot help wishing that the boys had made a cleaner job of it last night, but my conscience rather reproaches me."

"All I can say, then," replied the Squire, "is, that your conscience is a mighty ignorant conscience, and the sooner you get a new one the better. He has not a legal right, because he has taken advantage of the letter of the law to act against its spirit; and he has not a moral right, because he is taking other people's property."

"How do you make that out?" said the Parson.

"Why, as to the moral right, the thing is evident enough. The salmon is not a sea fish, spawned anywhere and hatched anyhow; but a river fish, watched during its spawning with great care and expense, and which would never be in sufficient numbers to make it worth that fellow's while to come here were it not so watched. Now, here is a man, who takes no part of the expense, intercepting the whole of the profits from those who do. I say the salmon are the



property of those who rear them, and any one who takes them commits a moral wrong."

"Well, there does seem to be something in that; but how do you make out the legal wrong?"

"Answer me this," said the Squire, "what were the salmon laws made for?"

"To protect the salmon, I suppose."

"Right as an oracle," said the Squire; "but they were made in the dark ages, when our wise representatives imagined that every salmon went to sea with a chronometer in his pocket, and worked up his dead reckoning every day, so that, when his cruise was up, he made his port with the same ease and accuracy as an East Indiaman hits off the Sand-heads going out, or the Long-ships coming home. What they meant to do was to protect them, and they thought that when they gave them a mile from the river's mouth they had protected them.

"Well, now comes this discovery. It turns out, that the salmon are by no means the skilful navigators that our wiseacres supposed them to be; that when they come home from their cruise they merely make the coast somewhere, it may be a good hun-

dred miles from the mouth of their river ; and that they discover their port at last by coasting along with their noses close to the shore till they begin to smell their native waters. It is quite evident, therefore, that if a man can find a place on one of the capes, where he can put out his nets for a hundred yards or so into the sea, anywhere within the estuary, he must intercept one-half of the fish ; and if he can find a place on the other cape, he must intercept the other half, though there be miles of deep water between them ; because it is the nature of the fish to go grubbing down to the shore in search of its river, and not to keep to the deep water."

" Well," said the Parson, " this must, no doubt, ruin every fishery ; we are sorry for it, but where is the injustice ?"

" Because it goes against the spirit of the law, though it adheres to the letter. The law was made to protect the fish, and this renders it inoperative."

" This becomes more evident," said one of the Ballyshannon fishermen, who was a barrister, and had given some attention to the subject,— " This becomes more evident, when you consider the theory of property

in general, and the very peculiar nature of this species of property. All property is an artificial creation for the benefit of the public. A private individual is permitted to have property in land, in order that it may be worth his while to work it, so as to produce wheat and bread; and it would not be worth his while, if any one might help himself to his crop. Don't suppose that the law does this for the benefit of the cultivator, but for the benefit of those whom it excludes—that is to say, the public—that they may have bread to eat. Micky Byrne is permitted to poison his trout-stream with that beastly field of flax, and the law does not allow us to prevent him; but that is not out of kindness to Micky Byrne, but that you, and I, and all of us, should have, when we want it, a new set of shirts. And so, also, with these salmon. Parliament has no particular affection for the proprietor of this fishery, nor for the renter; it legislates for the many, and creates a proprietor, because, from the peculiar nature of the salmon, there must necessarily be a proprietor, in order that the markets of Liverpool should be supplied, and the rich Papists of Cheshire

and Lancashire should fare sumptuously every Friday."

"That is precisely my idea," said the Squire. "In every other case, the owner of the land is the owner also of the beasts and birds which the land produces: the owner of the water is the owner also of the fish that swim in the water. But with the salmon, the case is different; one person is made the owner of all the fish in the river, whether that river run through his own land or not. The reason for this difference is evident,—it is for the benefit of the public that it should be so. The salmon enters the river fit for the market, but as he proceeds inland he becomes red, and by the time he reaches his breeding-grounds, where he is most defenceless, he is fit for nothing. It is quite evident, therefore, that if this species of property followed the laws which regulate everything else, those who profit by it would be unable to protect it, and those who are able to protect it would have no interest in doing so."

"Precisely," said the Ballyshannoner. "And now see what must be the ultimate effect of this new discovery on the markets.

Recollect, it is for the good of the public that the fish are made private property,—that the laws intended to make them so, and did make them so, to the best of the information of the framers. A company now contrives to evade these laws, and to take fish which they have had no hand in rearing, but which have been reared under an expensive system of preserving, and a numerous array of water-keepers. Well, we will suppose the interlopers successful: they catch half the fish, and for that year the markets are as well supplied as before, and nobody cares. But the fishery now no longer supports its staff of water-bailiffs: the head-waters are neglected; the spawning fish are destroyed by otters, or speared by the peasantry; and the next year there are no fish to be caught by either proprietor or interloper; the fish-markets of Liverpool fail, and the jolly rich Papist of Lancashire is reduced to fast on red herrings like his vulgar neighbours. The operation is not quite so quick as this, because a man takes a good deal of ruining, and will go on hoping; but that is the result, you may depend upon it.”



“ I should not wonder,” said the Captain. “ When I was on the Doon, some years ago, the fishery was completely destroyed. The late Marquess of Ailsa had established these nets at the river’s mouth, and the people had left off preserving fish that they were never to catch. But the present Marquess, on coming to his title and property, and seeing the injustice and impolicy of the thing, ordered the obstruction to be removed, and the river is as full of fish as ever it was.”

“ Why does not Parliament interfere, and mend their own laws?” said the Parson.

“ So they will, ultimately, when the effect is felt on the markets. I do not suppose that the public will be permanently injured ; but, in the meantime, the present renters are ruined, and, what is more to our purpose now, whole hosts of water-keepers lose their employment. Paddy is not the boy to sit down quietly under that, while his trees grow shillelaghs.”

“ You expect another outbreak, then?” said the Squire.

“ I hope not,” said the Parson. “ Hector

has obtained so strong a guard of police, that another attack can hardly be made without considerable loss of life, whichever party is victorious. But I should not be surprised ; the people are desperate at the prospect of losing their employment. There are a pretty many of them, and lots of idlers besides, who will join for the fun of the thing."

"What a singular difference there is," said the Squire, "between these poor Paddies and Englishmen of the same class. In England, every man does his best to forward the operation of the law ; in Ireland, every man does his best to thwart it."

"Why do you make a distinction of classes?" said the Parson. "*Poor Paddy* only does what he sees his betters doing. In this blessed country, every man's hand is against the law, rich or poor. Look here." They had been sauntering up the bank to the upper end of the island, where the smaller stream separates from the main river, and runs through the salmon-boxes. The Parson stirred up the water with the handle of his gaff, which operation was immediately followed by the simultaneous plunge

of some twenty or thirty imprisoned salmon. "Look here. The law says that on Sunday no fish shall be caught, but that they shall have twenty-four hours' free-passage every week for the benefit of the breeding. That is the law: now look at the fact. Certainly no fish is caught, for here they are swimming, and may go to sea again, if they please to turn back, and can hit the opening; so the letter of the law is not broken. They are merely detained in these boxes till to-morrow, when the law protects them no longer, and then comes the gaff and the priest.\* Depend upon it, the Paddies are all alike,—high and low, rich and poor."

"Do put the iron of your gaff round that middle rail," said the Scholar; "it is a good deal weaker than the rest, and one good pull would bring it down. I should like to give these fish the benefit of the Act."

"Hurrah, Paddy!" said the Parson: "there is another instance for you. An Englishman would have laid an information

\* Priest—a short wooden mallet, whose offices are required when the salmon is *in extremis*. Properly speaking, this technicality belongs to the Shannon.

—an Irishman trusts to his own right hand and his own gaff-iron. Put your own plan into execution your own self, man ; here is my gaff to do it with. I'll not have a hand in it ; it is not according to the genius of my country."

"Upon my word," said the Squire, joining in the general laugh, "I do not think the Parson far wrong ; Paddy is essentially a law-breaking animal. It is a 'great fact,' but why it should be so I cannot imagine."

"Paddy himself would ascribe it to English misgovernment," said the Captain.

"Paddy himself would not be far wrong," said the Parson ; "though it might not be in the sense in which he understands it. He has been terribly misgoverned, and is terribly misgoverned now."

"Hallo !" said the Ballyshannoner ; "this is something new. Are you turning Radical at your time of life ?"

"By no means," said the Parson. "Paddy's idea of misgovernment and mine would not exactly coincide. The fact is, that nations pass from savagery to civilisation through the intermediate stage of feudalism,

—and don't be entertaining the vulgar idea that feudalism is a state of bullying and tyrannising ; that is the exception and the misuse : had it been so generally, we should never have heard of that clannish fidelity which has become proverbial. Feudalism is a state of protection on the one hand, and attachment on the other. The whole country is divided into so many little allied states, under the simplest form of government, such as the unlettered serf can see and understand, though his mind is not enlarged enough to realise the government of a whole country. By these he learns his lesson—he finds out the nature of government ; and thus, by slow degrees, he learns to govern himself, and works out his own freedom, century by century, by fitting his mind to understand it and himself to use it ; and thus, no one knows how, the feudal government gradually merges into quarter-sessions and parish-vestries, every man still interested in supporting the law, because every man has a share in administering it.

“Here in Ireland — thanks to Oliver Cromwell and the glorious, pious, and immortal William,—this feudal stage has been



suddenly and rudely annihilated. Paddy has never had a chance of learning his lesson ; and now we are giving these poor fellows our own free institutions, which they neither appreciate nor know how to use, and we wonder they make a mess of them. How can they be misgoverned ? we say ; have they not got just the same laws as we have ? Yes ; but that is precisely what they ought not to have. A box of surgical instruments may be very useful things to a surgeon, but they are not, therefore, the present I should make to a set of children.”

“ Well, but what remedy would you apply now ? ” said the Squire. “ You would not restore the feudal state ? ”

“ Mine,” said the Captain, “ would be to ask the devil for a month’s loan of Oliver Cromwell.”

“ And you would succeed no better than you deserve,” said the Parson. “ It must be years of patient firmness—not days of vindictive punishment. Restore the feudal state ! I would if I could ; but you cannot restore those feelings of attachment which have been violently wrenched asunder ; you cannot bring back that instinctive loyalty

and irrational obedience which is given to our national childhood, in order to preserve it until it is capable of true loyalty and reasoning obedience. They are not freemen—they have never learnt, and therefore I would not play at freemen with them. They do not yet understand the principles of Truth and Justice—till they have learnt them, I would give them no trial by jury. They cannot meet without fighting like savages—till they do so, I would not give them the franchise of civilisation. I would suspend the Habeas Corpus permanently, and then I would govern them as you would govern children, as honestly and as justly as I could, but peremptorily; and I would do this in the hope of teaching them one day to govern themselves, and as the only means of doing so. His own condition, if you like, should be his criterion; when I saw him respect himself—ay, when I saw his house neat and tidy, with a little flower-garden round it, like our English cottages, I would begin to respect him myself; but as long as I saw him making no difference between himself and his pig, I would take him at his own valuation, and treat him accordingly.”

“Upon my soul,” said the Captain, “there is a great deal of truth in this. John Bull, worthy, honest, conceited old gentleman, is fully convinced that no one can enjoy, or ought to enjoy, one single day’s comfort or happiness in any other habiliments than his own wide-skirted blue coat, broad-brimmed, flat-crowned hat, and brown topped-boots ; he has, in his wonderful generosity, fitted out poor Paddy with a full suit of his own as good as new, and now gets thoroughly scandalised that his jaunty cousin has cocked the steady, sober old hat, over one eye, trod the respectable boots down at heel, and is trailing the venerated blue coat through the mire, with a flourish of sticks and a ‘Hooroo ! who’ll dare to tread on that ?’ I remember, when I was ten years old, a fox-hunting old uncle of mine rigged me out in a pair of top-boots and buckskin breeches, just like his own ; and the first thing I did with them was to put them on for an evening party. If John really has Paddy’s welfare at heart, he will not stick him up with such manly absurdities, but fit him out with a good round boy’s jacket, send him to school, give him a little birch

and plenty of kindness, and by and bye he will wear his long-tailed coat with the best of them."

"All very fine talking," said the Squire, "but who is to do this with the House of Commons staring him in the face?"

"Ah! who?" said the Parson. "Strafford did once. He did administer 'justice to Ireland;' he was the only governor they ever had, who had at once the head to understand and the heart to execute. Hallam says, 'he oppressed the oppressors, and delivered the Irish from themselves.'"

"Ay," said the Captain, "once delivered from those scoundrels, there is no reason why Ireland is not to do as well as her neighbours."

"Why not Ireland as well as Scotland?" said the Barrister. "They only want one master-hand to grapple with their own abuses, and one dauntless heart to do right in the face of public opinion."

"Only?" said the Parson. "Why, they never had but one such in their whole history, and he lost his head for it. It is no fault of Paddy's; deprived of his natural leaders before he is wise enough or old

enough to govern himself, of course he takes up with all this scum of agitators and demagogues that make money or notoriety by him."

"Poor Ireland," said the Squire, "your worst enemies and your worst oppressors are your own children and your own friends. You have been tyrannised over by aliens, no doubt, and so has England, and so has every country under the sun; and, like them, you would have flourished under it, and outgrown it. It is your friends that are destroying you, and from them there is no deliverance. God does not grant two Straffords to one country."\*

"Come, let us be off," said the Ballyshannoner, "and see whether Cockburn has

\* Warburton, who is anything but an advocate of despotism, or the defender of Charles and his ministers, speaks thus of Strafford's administration of Ireland:—

"It was a fine field for Wentworth's commanding genius. He dealt with it as with a conquered country; and by the stern simplicity of martial law he at once repressed the *chronic insurrectionary spirit*, and crushed the *system of petty legislation*, which served only to irritate the people, and disgust them with the English laws. His imperious nature disdained the bondage of precedent; he turned his searching glance on the *fiscal*



anything like supper for us. We shall have a jolly day's fishing to-morrow—I never saw the weather so promising.”

“It always is on Sunday,” said the Scholar; “that is our luck.”

“Bother your head for a grumbler,” said the Captain; “whenever you cannot catch you lay the blame on the weather.”

“So does every fisherman that I ever saw or heard of.”

“True for you, my boy,” said the Captain. “By the way, Squire, talking of weather, what luck had you with that new fly of yours? This has been such an agitating day, that no one has thought of anything but battle, murder, and sudden death. You know what we did at Lough Derg in

*abuses* that had prevailed, and been tolerated by his predecessors. By this inquisition he quadrupled the king's revenue in a few years; he stimulated commerce; he promoted agriculture; he disciplined, paid, and recruited the army, suppressed its disorders, and elevated its character. The government of Strafford was arbitrary, and even tyrannical; but it stayed and absorbed that minor and universal license of oppression that had so long worried Ireland. The people of that unintelligible country grew wealthier in the midst of exactions, and happier by oppression.”

that queer night scramble. What have you done? Is there any truth in dreams?"

"Upon my word," said the Squire, "it is very singular. I shall really begin to believe in fairies, like the Parson."

"What, have you caught another whale?"

"By George, I did, and rose two or three more; and not a fish besides broke the water all down the river. The water was as thick as pea-soup—it has not run clear yet, as you may see."

"Pat swears by the fly, then?"

"You may say that; and not without cause. We did not see much in the Upper Throws, but as I was passing by Reade's I saw a fish rise naturally. Now you know how shallow Reade's Throw is, and that if you see a fish rise in shallow water there is every chance that he will rise again. I thought this a capital opportunity for giving Foul-weather Jack a thorough trial; so I first slipped him off, and put on a beautiful Killmore. Well, I tried and tried, and flogged and flogged, for a good half-hour. I put my fly over every inch of the pool—I might as well have spit upon it. 'Now, Pat,' said I, 'I think that is fairly tried;

and if Killmore will not do, it is of no great use to try butterfly or mixed wing.' So I looped on Jack again; and, if you will believe me, at the very first throw I was in him. You need not laugh, upon my soul it's true, and a jolly fish he was."

"Did you land him?" said the Captain.

"Well, I did; but I thought I never should, more particularly as Pat had left the gaff at the Grass Guard, and had to fetch it. You know what a queer throw Reade's is. You go out into the river for thirty yards or so on a great pavement of broad slabs, like that at Rose Isle, only two feet under water, and with great deep crevices of half-a-yard wide between them, the water so thick that you could not tell deep from shallow, and rushing along in flood so that I could hardly keep my footing as I stood, even without going stumbling after the fish. The pool, as you know, is not a very big one—not above a hundred yards each way—and the fish did not like to face the furious broken water of the rapids above or below it. By George, sir! his motions were more like those of a swallow than they were to anything like what I ever saw a fish do,—back-

wards and forwards, up stream and down stream, tail on end, half-a-dozen springs in the air at once; then, before I could look round, there he was in the air again behind me. You would have thought that there were two or three fish on at the same time."

"Why, how did you contrive to keep a tight line?" said the Captain.

"I did not keep a tight line. How on earth could I? There I was, tied to the spot. I could not take a step for fear of pitching into the deep water; and that scoundrel Pat gone after the gaff. My line was in bights half the time, and carried down by the stream, while the fish was running up like a shot; so that whenever I did get a pull on him and found him again, it was just where I did not expect him to be."

"Well, and how did you land him at last?"

"Upon my word I do not know. St. Columba was merciful, I suppose. It was no merit of mine, for the fish had it all his own way from first to last. Pat did come back after a good half hour, which seemed

to me a good three ; and he did stick his gaff in, that I know, but how he did it, or how I got to shore, is an undeveloped mystery. At all events, you ate the fish to-day, and the devil a one besides did any one catch."

"Hurrah for dreams !" said the Captain. "Come, here we are at Cockburn's ; let us top off with a good jug of punch to the memory of your fish ; we'll have plenty more to-morrow, if this weather lasts."

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*Note.*—There are few persons in any way connected with the Irish fisheries who will not cordially agree with the sentiments expressed in this chapter. Such has been the progress of science in the arts of destroying fish, that if things go on as at present, in a very few years the breed of Irish salmon will become extinct.

The truth of this anticipation was impressed painfully on the author's mind, during a short fishing tour which he took in the south of Ireland during the summer of 1850. The rapids of Castle Connell on the Shannon, which, take them altogether, are, perhaps, the very first fishing-ground in the United Kingdom, had been deserted, first by fish, and then by fishermen ; the Kitchen\* and the Pantry\* were alike empty, not one single assembly had taken place in the Dancing Hole ;\*

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\* These are the names of remarkable throws in the Doonas rapids.



the picturesque little cots were floating idly at their moorings, and the boatmen were sober, for they had not a cron a bane to pay for their whisky. So it was on the Laune; so it was on the Blackwater. Wherever the author turned his steps, it was the same, — blank faces, empty pockets, heavy maledictions.

Perhaps, however, he will convey the liveliest impressions of the real state of the case, by quoting a letter addressed to the editor of *The Times* by one of the principal sufferers:—

“TO THE EDITOR OF ‘THE TIMES.’

“*From an Irish Salmon.*

“SIR,—I hope you will do ‘justice’ to Irish salmon, by letting your readers know how we are treated, and how very little protection is afforded to us by the laws of the land.

“My consort and I wanted to pass up our native river this year to breed. She was in a very interesting state, and in a hurry to deposit some 17,000 eggs in a secure place. However, we put off the perilous ascent to the latest time, and remained in the sea, much to our discomfort. We fetched the bar of the Blackwater, county of Waterford, on the 20th of August, having narrowly escaped some execrable ‘engines’ called bag-nets, the jaws of which yawned wide. Two porpoises met us mid-channel, as they were floundering out to sea; one of the brutes ran open-mouthed at my dear companion, and she was forced to fly into shallow water; there three fellows were hauling in a draught-net: however, she made a leap over the corks, and was soon again by my side.

“ We swam together up the stream for some miles, running the gauntlet of about twenty of those villanous contrivances, stake-nets, and dodging in and out between them to escape from one of our old enemies, a seal, who was on the look-out for all comers, and was swimming round the chambers of the nets, *faisant l'eau dans la bouche* at some younger brothers of mine, caught in them, who were not up to trap.

“ We lay by for Sunday, when the Duke must open his traps in the Lixmore-weir, and that night got safe through.

“ All these dangers past, we remained tolerably safe for some weeks in a well-known hole under Ballymacchem, prudently abstaining from several nice-looking flies, and also from a minnow, suffering apparently from vertigo. My spouse was ‘expecting’ about the end of the next month, and, as she was growing ‘heavy,’ wished to get over the mill-weirs while able to jump. These we cleared during floods, spite of some scheming miller’s men with their gaffs, and at last arrived at our native bed of gravel on the night of the 30th of October. I set to work at once to root up a trench with my snout. Suddenly a light shone from the bank, and, alas! before I could warn my poor partner of the danger, I heard the horrid splash, and an atrocious Celt had transfixed her with his spear.

“ Not a single *Salmo salar* of the feminine gender has yet come up to these parts. Oh, that my too, too solid flesh, could melt! What is to be done? I fear they have all eloped with the rising generation to Newfoundland.

“ What has become of all the good old laws for our

preservation? Are they stinking fish? You British men talk of Magna Charta, but cold-blooded creatures like us boil at the violation of its provisions.

“May all bad fish-law-makers be hooked, gaffed, priested, crimped, gutted, grilled, and served with sharp sauce.

“Yours, &c.

“AN IRISH SALMON.”

The author deeply regrets that he had not an opportunity during his last tour of making acquaintance with the intelligent writer of this letter, who is evidently a schoolmaster of great weight, as well as experience. He trusts, however, that he shall, in the course of next summer, be able to meet him at his favourite harbour of Ballymacatchem. He will not fail to send him a line, and sincerely hopes that he will have the pleasure of his company at dinner. In the meanwhile he heartily joins in the prayer of his petition, which he does with great goodwill, and not the less so, that it will, in all probability, comprehend the majority of the present House of Commons.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE RIVER.

Jealousies among the Fishermen — A Bivouac — A Narrative — Cos na Wonna — The Grass Guard — Circumventing a Sulky Salmon — The Point of the Mullins — The Fly with lead in it — The Bar of the Bush — Crossing the Ford — Catching a School-master — Jack the Giant-killer.

“HALLO! who’s there?” said the Parson, rousing himself from his morning slumbers, and sitting up in his bed.

“Sure it’s me, your riverence—it’s Pat Gallagher.”

“What’s in the wind now?” said the Parson; “what brings you here at this time of night? Any more murders to come off?”

“The divel a one, your riverence, worse luck!” said Pat; “but the boys says, says they, that the Barrister goes every morning at screech of day to Cos na Wonna, lest e’er a sowl should get the throw of him, and waits

there till the light is strong to catch a fish, and I'm thinking it's your riverence that would like to take the lade of him."

"Well, I don't know. I don't care if I do," said the Parson. "What sort of a morning is it?"

"Faix then, your riverence, the morning's ilegant entirely; it's betther nor two nor three tails either we'll be turning to-day, I'll engage."

"Just let the Captain know which side of the river we take. We shall not be in the Squire's way; he goes, of course, to the Bank of Ireland. There, rouse up Thomas, the Squire's servant, and get a coffee-pot, and some eggs, and anything you can lay your hands upon, and we will go down and breakfast there, and take possession at once for fear of accidents. What's the time?"

"Just three, your riverence; and I heard the Barrister snoring as I came up."

"Well, don't make a noise then in getting out the rod, and don't leave the gaff behind you this time. Wait for me just outside the town, and take care, whatever you do, that Tommy Lightly does not see you, or he will



be rousing out his master, and it will be all up with us."

"I'll not be waking a mouse, I'll engage," said Pat.

The jealousy which subsisted between the party at Belleek and that at Ballyshannon was something inconceivable. It began, of course, among their respective attendants — partisanship is as necessary to Irish life as the air they breathe; — but this disease is very catching, and it soon began to be participated in by their masters, and that to an extent which they would have been ashamed to acknowledge to themselves. Whenever they met on the river the flies were carefully concealed, lest the enemy should see the favourite colour of the day — perhaps something of a perfectly different kind would be stuck into the hat-band in full view, as if through carelessness, in the hopes of misleading an unwary fisherman; every one avoided mentioning the throws that he had fished, for perchance his adversary might lose his time in fishing them after him; while the fish caught by each were paraded into the town with a sort of triumph, and registered with eager anxiety at the fish-

house. This feeling was, of course, repudiated among the gentlemen, as altogether unworthy of them; as indeed it was, but it was none the less acted upon for all that. Among the followers themselves the feeling was undisguised and open, and that it did not produce a goodly crop of shillelaghs, was only because their masters discountenanced utterly and severely repressed such active exhibitions of personal attachment.

In good truth, it was fully as much for the pleasure of outwitting the Barrister, as in hope of catching a fish, that the Parson took his seat under the wall at Cos na Wonna, some half hour before the earliest streaks of dawn revealed the soft outline of the hills about Enniskillen. The rod was pitched in a conspicuous place to catch the earliest rays, and give notice that the throw was occupied, and Pat busied himself with kindling a fire which he had built up from a pillaged turf stack. The coffee, which was soon simmering on the hot turfs, did duty also to boil the eggs, while the pewter bottoms of the whisky flasks formed very fair substitutes for coffee-cups.

“Pat,” said the Parson, when all these

preparations had been duly completed, and that worthy had seated himself in a contented mood with half-an-inch of black pipe between his teeth, "it struck me yesterday, when you were favouring us with all that blarney about the county Mayo boys, that you knew yourself a good deal more about that business of Hector's than you were pleased to tell us."

"Maybe I did," said Pat, in a stage whisper.

"So I thought," said the Parson; "and maybe you were one of the party yourself?"

"Sure, thin, your riverence, it's I that was, and a purty business we had of it."

"And were those nice boys with you that we saw before the magistrates yesterday?"

"Av coorse they wor, every mother's sowl of them."

"And that fellow Micky Rowan, who cross-examined the sergeant so cleverly—Counsellor Micky you should call him—was he there?"

"Sure, your riverence, and was not he our captain? And a rale bowld boy he is."

“By George, I thought he was not quite such a fool as he looked. Well, Pat, I suppose you have no objection to tell me all about it?”

“Faith, I’ll just be doing that, your rivenence. Now, your worship, d’ye see, all them watherkeepers was mighty mad upon Hector, because they’d all be turned off when there was norra a fish to look after. So they goes to Micky, who was the boy to do the job. So Micky says, says he, that it must be done,—so he goes to the tinants, them as did the first job for Hector; but, bad luck to them, the divel a sowl would come, for, d’ye see, afther the first fight, which them boys did right clever, the landlord just upped and tould them to their heads, that they should have no more hand in it. So them dirty spalpeens afther that would not stir a fut. So then Micky turns away mad enough, for he’d towld the watherkeepers that he would ris a big faction. So he goes to the boys of Ballyshannon, and he says to them, says he, ‘Sure, then, boys, there’s that blackguard Hector that’s spoiling the country entirely—divel the petaty will the boys that keeps the river have to

put into their mouths at all, at all—dive! the fish can the jintlemen catch for that dirty spalpeen there, the bloody black curse of Cromwell upon him! and none of them will be afther coming here next season, and it's you, boys, that'll be sorry for that. And I'm thinking that Hector's nets should be bruk,' says he; 'and I'm thinking that you are just the boys that'll be helping me,' says he; 'and there's lashins of whisky to be had for the axin.' 'And that we'll do right well,' says they. So it was all agreed that they should meet at Mick Neil's shebeen on Thursday. (Yir riverence will know Mick, him as lives jist forenent Father Grath's, where your riverence at times gets the laste sup of whisky.) Well, we all met there, sure enough; but Thursday was a bright starlight night, as bright as day, and we were all afeard, so we just put it off to the night afther. But that was Friday, and that yir riverence knows is never a looky day by say or by land, and we thin put it off to Satherday. Well, then, Satherday sure it was, and we all met at Mick's shebeen, a huntherd dacent boys of us, and a purty night it was, barring the darkness.



First we raised our spurrets a trifle with a dhrop of the rale Stone Turf, and then straight away to the sandhills. There we got a boat, and pulled straight for the shore of Kildoney.

“As soon as we wor all landed, Micky says, ‘Pheny, my boy,’ says he (your riverence will not know Pheny, but he’s a rale boy); ‘Pheny,’ says he, ‘you’ll just take twenty of the boys, and make prisoners of them blackguards as watches over the slobweirs, and then you’ll come on to the barrack.’

“So then Micky, with the rest of us, goes on straight for the barracks; and iligant did we get on, creeping along as still as murder, when all at once, a-lepping the ditch close to the barracks, we came right on an ould divel of a harse, bad luck to him! sleeping under the wall. Up jumps the harse, and runs nickering away right up to the barrack. ‘Crass o’ Christh!’ says Micky, ‘we’re done for harse and fut; run boys, and make sure of the barrack.’ And away went Micky after the harse, and we all of us hung back, not just knowing what to do,

when crack! crack! crack! comes three shot right in amongst us, and sure one on 'em takes a poor crather right in the shoulther. 'Och murther, I'm kilt,' says he, without spaking a word, for fear it would frighten the boys. So thin we all pushed forward, and, sure, when we got up, there was Micky Rowan, and the divel a sowl else, hanging hard at the door, and them black-guard Peelers poking their carbines out of the winders. Well, your riverence, the boys just lets drive at them half-a-dozen shot to ask them to be civil, and that it just did, and we sat smoking and talking with them mighty comfortable till Pheny 'd cut the nets to smithereens."

"Upon my word, Pat, you seem to have managed this business cleverly eniough, and really I think Micky ought to be a general as well as a counsellor; and so he will be, if he is not hanged first. But tell me, why did you not let me know this yesterday? What was the use of humbugging us with that story of yours?"

"And who'd have been the fool, then?" said Pat. "Do you think I'd be after telling

your riverence, and maybe get your riverence brought up before them magistrates?"

"Well, I cannot but thank you for your considerateness, Pat: it is just as well I did not know it. But you've made a pretty business of it, after all. Those eight fellows will be hanged if they catch them."

"Divel a fear of that, your riverence; sure and who'd be swearing agin them? Didn't Tommy Lightly get off that was taken in the first fight? and did not every mother's sowl of them, man, woman, and child, know that he was there?"

"Well! a happy deliverance to them," said the Parson; "and upon my word I think they deserve it. It was very well-behaved of them to let the Peelers off so easily, for their blood must have been up a little after seeing one of their fellows knocked over. I hope that boy is not going to die, though."

"Divel a fear of that, your riverence. The bullet was clean cut out of his shoulther this morning, and there it is; I thought your riverence would like to have it."

"Well, you had better not let any one see this piece of lead," said the Parson, "it

might tell tales. But come, sharp with the coffee, Pat, we shall have the sun over the hills in ten minutes' time. By the way, what have you done with the wounded man?"

"He's at Widow Hine's, your riverence," said Pat, as he carefully poured out the coffee into its pewter receptacle; "but we'll have him up to the mountains to-night out of the way."

"Hallo! here they come at last," said the Parson, as the rising sun glanced against a couple of long salmon rods that seemed moving of themselves on the other side of the wall. "I wonder whether they are quite awake yet."

"I think his honour the Barrister will soon have his eyes open now," said Pat; "a mighty purty sleep his honour had this morning."

"Well, that is what I call taking a dirty advantage over a man," said the Barrister, coming up laughing, while his two followers looked daggers at Pat. "Did you bivouac here last night?"

"Fill him up a cup of coffee, Pat," said the Parson; "he may think himself lucky to

find such good stuff as that on the river. We Belleekers are early birds, and you must not snore so long or so loud if you mean to weather upon us. It is some time since I have had a chance at Cos na Wonna, and I mean to have a fish or two out of it to-day I can tell you."

"Well, good luck to you," said the Barrister; "if you do, it will be more than I have done for this week past."

Pat gave a knowing look, and muttered something to himself, which seemed as if he did not put implicit faith in the Barrister's veracity; while the Parson, unhooking from the lower ring of his rod a beautiful specimen of his yellow namesake, shook his line clear and prepared for action. The river was in beautiful order, with just a tinge and no more of the late flood. There was a light westerly breeze rippling against the current, and a cloud, just sufficient to dim, but not heavy enough to cast a gloom upon the rising sun. It was impossible to imagine a more promising morning; but whether it was that it was too early in the day, or whether the fish had not yet recovered from the late floods, or whether, as was more than



probable, the Ballyshannon water-fairies had set their faces against the interloping Belleeker; or whatever might be the reason, no exertion of skill, no exercise of patience, no change of fly, would raise a single fish from his stony couch at the bottom.

“Upon my word, Pat, this will never do,” said the Parson, handing the heavy rod to his follower, and resting his aching shoulders after an hour’s unintermitted whipping. “I am afraid we must fall back on our own ground after all; we shall have nothing for our pains here, except the pleasure of having weathered on that Ballyshannoner.”

“That’s some comfort, anyhow,” said Pat. “But I think if your riverence will try the Grass Guard and Johnstone’s as we go up, we’ll turn the tail yet. His honour the Barrister cannot fish them throws—he does not cast a line long enough yet, nor ever will, please God.”

“Yes, but Tommy Lightly does,” said the Parson; “and he will set him at work rather than leave the fish for us.”

“We’ll just try, your riverence; and, by

the blessing of God, we'll beat his honour the Barrister, and Tommy Lightly too."

The Grass Guard, to which they were now approaching, to all appearance had been, in times of geological antiquity, the boundary of a small lake, and above that barrier the river had still, for half a mile or so, a broad, quiet, calm, lake-like appearance. A ridge of low, lumpish, round-headed hills, at the most not forty or fifty feet high, looked as if they had once crossed the river's course at right angles, forming a sort of pond head: it seemed as if this chain had been broken through, either by a flood or by some convulsion of nature, for they now exhibited two abrupt cliffs not fifty yards apart, and corresponding to each other, like the cheeks of a gigantic embrasure; through this the river was pouring its abundant waters, the opening being still farther contracted, and the current accelerated by the remains of a ruined eel-weir.

"Holy Virgin! the Captain's in him!" said Pat, as they arrived at the top of the cliff which crowns the right bank, and looks down on the stream; and sure enough, just below them, but on the opposite side, stood

the Captain, the current rippling round his legs, his line straining, and his rod bent into the form of the letter C. He had waded out some ten or twelve yards into the stream, fully as far as he could go with safety, or perhaps a little farther, and, standing on a flat white stone, which marks the very outside point on which a man can under any circumstances keep his legs, had hooked a fish at the full length of his longest line. It had made its rush up stream, as fish at the Grass Guard invariably do, till their strength is exhausted; and whether it was from inadvertence, or that he was cramped in his dangerous position, standing as he did at the very break of the rapid, or whether he was not quite so well skilled in the Ballyshannon waters as he was in those of Belleek, so it was that the fish had taken advantage of the only danger of the Grass Guard Throw, a sunken rock that stands in the very middle of the river, some thirty yards above the fall, had run him across it, and, sinking down sulky and motionless with his nose against the farther side of it, had defied every attempt to move or dislodge him.

This is one of the most common ways of losing a fish ; it can happen only when the salmon, in some of his various manœuvres, has succeeded in getting a slack line. Whenever such an accident occurs, to pull is perfectly useless, the nose of the fish rests against the rock, and the line passes over it, resting probably against one of its sharp edges, and consequently the only effect of a strain will be to part the line. If the stream can be crossed either by wading or boating, so as to get the pull from the same side of the rock as that on which the fish has laid himself up, the danger, of course, is obviated ; but if this is impossible, the only resource is patience till the fish moves of his own accord, or the very faint chance of starting him by a well-aimed stone.

In the present case this latter resource was altogether out of the question ; the Captain himself was nearly a dozen yards from the dry land, and his line, full fifty yards in length, stretched still farther from the bank, pointing diagonally up and across the stream. The fish was evidently much nearer to the Parson's side of the river, who, by clambering out on the wing of an old ruined eel-

weir more than half under water, was able to get within thirty yards of him. The noise of the rapid was an effectual bar to conversation ; but the Captain and he had fished far too often together to be ignorant of each other's resources. At a given signal the Captain's rod was raised, and his line tightened along the surface, while the Parson's fly, having made two or three rapid circles in the air, alighted with great precision on his line ; thus hooking it, and forming with it a temporary cross-line. Carefully reeling up and tightening, the Parson gradually got the pull on his own side of the rock, when the salmon, feeling his defence gone, rushed furiously upwards. A slight flick released the auxiliary fly, and the Captain regained the command over his fish.\*

With a skilful eye and a practised hand, like the Captain's, the result could not long be doubtful ; supported by his attendants,

\* The real scene of this exploit was the Black Rock, about two miles higher up, where the stream is much narrower. The author has been told by an old Bel-lecker that the rock of the Grass Guard is altogether beyond the cast of a line from the right bank. He is aware of this, but it is not beyond the cast of a line



he gained the shore, guided his fish into the quiet, still pool above; and in answer to the Parson's congratulatory and farewell wave of the hand as he pursued his course, a fine white fourteen-pounder was held up by the tail in triumph.

It was late in the afternoon of the same day when the Scholar, attended by Slievan, was sitting on a reef of rocks on the right bank of the river, which extended some dozen yards or so into the lower end of a deep round pool. Below where they were sitting the river broke away into a series of rapids, which extended farther than the eye could reach; but above, it was as quiet and still as a pond, and deep enough to float a line-of-battle ship. The pool, which was nearly round, and a quarter of a mile or so in diameter, is called the Monk's Pool, and at the upper end of it the Monk's Ford, or Ballagh na Monach, might be traced, even at that

from the Danish eel-weir, and this is perfectly accessible from the right bank to a man who does not mind a wetting; it is, in fact, a much less dangerous place than the White Stone, where the Captain is represented as standing.

distance, by its line of ripples. The rock was the Point of the Mullins.

The Scholar and his follower were at that time intently occupied in splicing—not very scientifically, it must be confessed—a broken salmon rod, and at their feet lay a heavy salmon.

So completely were they absorbed in their occupation, that it was some minutes before either of them perceived the Parson, who, attended by Pat Gallagher and little Willie Mooshlan, was standing on the slab of rock behind watching them.

“Well done!” said he at last. “Well done! Come, that is getting on in your profession; and your fish is bigger by half than anything I have caught. Hand them down here, Willie, and let us have the steel-yards out and see what they look like.” There were two ten-pound fish, and a round, fat, little grawl, somewhat under seven; but the Scholar’s capture weighed down a good eighteen, and he exhibited a small grawl besides.

“What fly did you catch that fellow with?” said the Parson. “Did you not

find it rather too bright and calm for the Point of the Mullins?"

The Scholar looked a little confused, but Slievan answered readily,—

"Faix, your riverence, it was just a fly of our own."

"Of your own?" said the Parson, laughingly. "I thought the Squire was the only man to dream about new flies. But let us have a look at it."

"Ah, then, where is it? bad luck to it," said Slievan, affecting to look about the tackle. "Why then, your riverence, I cannot put my hand upon it—we wor mending the rod."

"What on earth are you thinking of? You stupid animal, don't you know that we Belleekers are partners? Come, no jealousy; show us the fly."

But the Scholar himself evinced no very great alacrity in exhibiting his fly, when Pat, pointing significantly to a deep cut just above the tail of the fish, which was bleeding profusely, said quietly,—“There was lead on that fly, anyhow.”

"Hey? What? What is that? O you sad scamp!" said the Parson, "you have no

excuse for poaching on such a day as this. What is that you have got in your hand, Slievan? Come, out with it at once—out with it. Are you not ashamed of yourselves?” he continued, laughing, as he held up three large hooks bound back to back, and weighted, as Pat had insinuated, with a heavy bead of lead, which hung down by a piece of barber’s silk from the middle of them.

“Well,” said the Scholar, “you need not laugh at me, at all events. I learned it from Slievan, and Slievan does say—lying dog that he is—that he learnt it from you, and that he saw you catch a fish with the Jack Ketch from this very throw.”

“I own the soft impeachment,” said the Parson; “but it was in bright weather, when we were hard run for fish—not on such a fine, warm, cloudy day as this. Nor do I myself boast the fine chivalrous sense of fair fishing, which the Captain professes; he would consider such a thing as this a regular piscatory swindle, and would be as much horror-struck at it as if you had been swindling men instead of fish.”

“You did not seem much more tolerant yourself just now.”



Point of the Mullins.





“O yes I am,” said the Parson. “My principle is — Fish, *si possis rectè, si non quocunque modo* Fish. But could you not manage it *rectè* on such a beautiful day as this?”

“Why, I did catch this grawl, and I lost a fine fish besides at the Tail of the Island; but when I came to this throw, which I had reckoned most upon, the obstinate brutes would keep rising at everything except my fly.”

“Ay, ay,” said the Parson, “not a very uncommon case.

‘The throuts and the salmons  
Keep playing their backgammons,  
But when I do go to catch them they immagently  
swim away.’

But you have broken your rod, I see.”

“Yes,” said the Scholar, “one is obliged to strike so hard. I lost the first fish, merely bringing away some two or three scales, and I was determined not to lose the next for want of striking.”

“An English rod would have stood that,” said the Parson, “but these Irish things always go at the third joint. I wonder you did not lose your fish.”

“So I should if we had not taken the water after it. See how wet I am. The fish rushed down stream, like a dog with a kettle at its tail, without stop or turn ; and there were we, sometimes in the water, and sometimes on shore, after it as hard as we could go. I thought it would have taken down Fox’s Rapid, and that my line must have gone among the broken rocks there ; but just before we got to the Sally Bush it turned slowly over, and by the time I had reeled up to it it was as dead as it is now.”

“Yes,” said the Parson, “that is always the way with them. Generally speaking, a fish running down stream, and becoming exhausted, will turn to breathe, and then run on merrily again, and, perhaps, break you after all ; but if he be hooked foul he cannot turn, because the pull is from his tail ; and the moment he opens his gills the water takes them in reverse and chokes him. That very thing has happened to me more than once, when the fish striking the fly with his tail, which shy salmon often do, has contrived to hook himself. In that case there is always a short but furious struggle ;

and if you do land your fish, you generally take him up dead."

"I think I shall try Jack Ketch again," said the Scholar.

"I shall not peach," said the Parson; "but I would not recommend you to try it on any throw but this."

"Why not?" said the Scholar.

"Because you must have a smooth bottom, or you miss your fish and lose your tackle. The principle of this piece of poaching is this :—Salmon do not lie, like trout, near the surface, but on the bottom. If that bottom be smooth and sandy, and you can throw a piece of lead at the end of your line and draw it steadily across the stream, it must come in contact with the side of the salmon, who, like all other fish, lies with his head up stream; on feeling a check you strike, in the same manner as you strike a pike, across the stream, and with the point of the rod low; and if the lead be armed with hooks, the chances are that one of them takes effect. But as hooks will take effect in weedy rocks as well as in anything else, and as the bottom of the Erne is little else than one continued mass of them, the

chances against you are somewhere about a hundred to one."

"It is not so with our northern rivers," said the Scholar.

"No," said the Parson. "I remember the Bush has a bar of fine white sand across its mouth; I should think you might catch half the fish that come into the river with the snatch-hooks."

"So you may," said the Scholar. "I remember a friend of mine, who rents one of those rivers, giving a man leave to fish. It happened to be a bright day, and nothing was to be done with the fly; so he took his station at the bar, and every fish that came across it he snatched. In the evening up he came to the fish-house, and, depositing some twenty fish, expected great commendation for his ingenuity. I never saw my friend so angry; he cancelled his leave, and sent him off the river with a flea in his ear."

"All I can say is, that your friend was a great donkey for being angry with a man who had offended through ignorance," said the Parson; "but he was right enough in putting a stop to the practice, it would have depopulated the river. I think, how-



ever, you will not do much harm with it here, and that you will greatly benefit your tackle-maker."

"Well, you have promised not to peach," said the Scholar. "If the Captain finds out how I caught this fish, I shall never hear the end of it."

"By the bye, I wonder where he and the Squire have got to : I expected to meet them hereabouts. You have not seen anything of them, have you ?"

"I saw the Squire about an hour ago," said the Scholar ; "he was at his favourite throw, the Bank of Ireland, and I thought I saw him going down the stream with a fish on : but I have not seen him since, nor, to tell you the truth, thought much about him ; I had my own little affairs to attend to. But do not I see some one on the opposite shore now, coming up from the Mois Ruah ?"

"It must be the Captain," said the Parson ; "he has got a tail of followers after him as long as O'Connell's. And look at his fish ! he must have made pretty good use of the day—I can count four, and they look like big ones. There goes the Squire from

the Black Rocks to meet him ; he has got a tail after him, too. Why, what on earth are they about ? There are two men carrying one fish ! The Squire must have caught a whale."

The combined party, who were wending their course up the stream, had now arrived nearly opposite to the Mullins Rock, and catching sight of the group sitting there, waved their hands in recognition, and altering their course, came up by the left shore of the Monk's Pool, instead of taking the direct path to Belleek.

"They are going to cross the Ford," said the Scholar, "and I vote we meet them at the landing-place, and hear what sport they have had."

The party, to the number of twelve or fourteen, had now entered the water, and were crossing slowly, in order to give the Captain time to fish the way before them, for the Ford is seldom without a salmon or two upon it. This time, however, the fishing was without success ; and the parties met on the beautiful sloping bank of short, thymy turf, that edges the right shore of the Monk's Pool.

At any other time Pat Gallagher would have been extremely disgusted that the fish, which his immediate master had caught, were exceeded so much both in number and weight by those of the Captain; for, besides the grand subject of partizanship between the Ballyshannoners and Belleekers, there was always a small subordinate jealousy going on among the followers, that their own particular master should be the head fisherman of their own party: but all such feelings were absorbed in intense admiration of the Squire's fish, and the thoughts that, let the Ballyshannoners do what they would, they could never come up to that. He would have felt himself a happier and a prouder man, no doubt, had the good fortune happened to his own particular master, but in the certainty of triumph of his party over the Ballyshannoners, he was content to overlook that.

As the Scholar had before noticed, the fish was carried by two men, one at the head and the other at the tail; not, as Johnny M'Gowan afterwards observed, but that one man might have carried it easily

enough, but that the boys wished to share in the honour and glory.

“Well done, Squire,” said the Parson, as his measuring-tape gave three feet two inches and a-half in length, and his steel-yard nearly twenty-seven pounds in weight. “You carry the rod this season, at all events—we shall none of us come up to that.”

“Thru for you,” said Johnny, exultingly. “There never was the fellow to that caught on the river, but the one, and him caught with a single gut too—a right school-master.”

“Long life to his honour! and didn’t I say that he’d bate them all?” said Paddy Mooshlan.

“And didn’t I know that his honour’d do just that all along?” chimed in little Willie.

“Where did you catch him?” said the Parson.

“At the Bank of Ireland,” said the Squire. “I had not been fishing there two minutes when he rose and missed me. After giving him the customary ten minutes’ rest, I went at it again with all possible caution,

and within a few inches of that ledge of rock which extends into the throw from my side of the river he rose again, and most deliberately took my fly, showing me as he descended the top of a broad dark head, of about the size and colour of a cricket-ball. I struck, and there was no great doubt of my being in him; not that he kicked up a very great stir, for, in the first instance, he went quietly to the bottom, and continued for ten minutes working gently round a circle of some thirty or forty yards, all this time closely hugging the bottom, from which, on account of his great weight, I was unable to raise him. He then returned, but still quietly, to the rock from under which I had at first hooked him. I sent Paddy to the rock, desiring him to drop a stone on the fish, who resented the insult by making a rush as quick as lightning, and that so suddenly, that he had nearly jerked the rod out of my hands: his direction was across the stream into the opposite throw of Sally Bush, till the water shoaled at the distance of somewhere about seventy yards from me; he then turned short and regained his own rock, on which I had now taken my stand.



In a few seconds I had recovered my line, and standing as I did directly over him, I had little trouble in dislodging him ; when, like a sulky retreating foe, unable to resist but unwilling to retire, he sailed quietly down the river some fifty yards, and finding another rock, again took shelter. Here we were detained for a considerable time, but he was dislodged at last, and made a rapid rush, still down stream, till he rounded the turn of the river where it enters upon the Black Rock Throw, and took up his position in the very midst of that cluster of rocks from which it takes its name."

"The most dangerous part of the whole river," said the Parson ; "the chances were fifty to one against your line standing for a single minute. How did you get out of that scrape ?"

"Why, we held a council of war, and at last I scrambled along the ledge, with Johnny holding me up under one arm and Paddy Mooshlan under the other, till I got a tight short line below my fish, and then, as a last resource, determined to try the strength of my tackle. I slacked the line upon him for ten minutes, hoping that he

might be deceived into the idea that he was at liberty. Then I gave him a twitch, followed by a strong, steady pull. It answered fully; for, making a rush from his last stronghold, he dashed down the river with the speed of a race-horse. Away went my line, catching and raising a blister on my finger, which I had not time to get out of the way—away went I, following as quick as I possibly could, for I had not a moment to spare; but, in spite of all I could do, my fish was in a couple of minutes full a hundred yards before me. I still pushed on, and at last, when I had scarcely a yard more of line to give him, my reel stopped, and looking forward I saw the monster on the surface of the water, but so distant that it was impossible to judge of his size. Turning him now was an easy task, and his head once more up stream, with some hundred yards of safe water before him, I had for the first time a hope of being able to land my fish. In fact, he made no more exertion till I had brought him close in; but on seeing Paddy, who was standing ready for gaffing, he made one more gallant effort, dashing right into the Tail of the

Island Throw, which is nearly opposite where we were now standing, and taking his course so near to the head of the rapid, that I had nothing for it but to turn him or break my line. Fortunately the tackle stood, and I had no difficulty in floating him over to where Paddy was watching with the gaff, and all was safe, for I never knew Paddy miss his gaff yet."

"Faix, then, it was not safe, your honour, for a mighty big stroke the divel guv me: it's nigh falling into the water I was."

"By George, I had forgotten that," said the Squire; "but it is true enough: the fish took poor Paddy such a blow across the face and breast with his tail, that it brought him fairly down, and boy and fish would have rolled into the water together if it had not been for Johnny."

"Hurrah!" said the Parson; "well done all hands! I suppose, Squire, after catching such a fellow as that, you could not condescend to try for meaner fish; it was the Captain, I remarked, who fished the Ford as you crossed."

"Faith, boys," said the Squire, "if you were nearly sixty years old like me, you

would find out another reason. What with the heat of the weather, and the ruggedness of the shore, and the weight and strength of the fish, I was fairly done up. I am fit for nothing more to-day."

"Except for a glass of whisky," said the Captain. "We must wake the big fish anyhow. Who has got any whisky in his flask?—mine is empty."

But all had not been so improvident, and enough was produced from one flask or another to supply a respectable dram to the whole party, numerous as it was; and three hearty cheers were given in honour of the Squire, and in memory of his gallant antagonist.

"What fly was it?" said the Captain; "you have forgotten to tell us that."

"A green Parson," said the Squire; "and there it is. I shall wear it in my hat for the rest of the season, for it shall never go into the mouth of a meaner fish."

"Green Parson no more," said the Captain; "it has earned for itself the rank and title of a substantive fly: it shall have a name of its own, and we will call it Jack the Giant-killer."

## CHAPTER XI.

### TUBBER TURNER.

Mois Ruah—The Well—Crimping Salmon—Forest Scenery rare in Ireland—The Rath—Tradition concerning them—Jenkin Fishing—Identity of the Jenkin and the Salmon—Yarrell's Experiments—Fishing by Proxy—Shooting the Falls—Third Attack on the Slob-weirs—A Stratagem—Final Victory—The White Cat Cove.

ON the left bank of the Erne, about two miles below Belleek, there is a spot of forest ground—it is but a spot—not fifty acres of it, though, from the irregularity of its surface, it might seem three times the size. From this point it is that the river is seen in its greatest beauty. A ridge of red earth interspersed with rocks, which, like all the strata in this part of the country, crosses the river at right angles, gives the place its name—by the natives it is called the Mois Ruah, or Red Bank, but the name is popularly corrupted by the English fishermen





Ballyshannon, from the Mois Ruah.



into Moss Row. Nor, indeed, is this latter appellation altogether inappropriate ; for, wherever the rough, rugged, limestone rocks, that break and diversify its surface, will afford the least hold for vegetation, it is clothed with the softest, greenest, mossiest turf, that ever fairy danced upon. Every here and there is a thicket of hazle, broken not only by the huge boulders and sharp ledges of rock that jut out from among their boughs, but also with a fair sprinkling of light feathery ash-trees, some of which have already attained the dignity of timber; while in every direction, and from every rocky crevice, peeps out the little, low, dark-leaved, clinging Scotch brier, with a perfect galaxy of white starlike blossoms.

From under one of these ledges of rock there rises a small trickling spring; it is slightly chalybeate, and as it is of temperature considerably lower than that of the river, it was on that account a favourite place with the fishermen for crimping their salmon, and their general rendezvous. It was in compliment to one of them, who, in times past had paved its little well-head with spars and crystals, that the spring was

taken from the protection of its aboriginal patron saint; and among the fishermen at least, and their followers, called popularly Tubber Turner, or Turner's Well.

The Parson was kneeling on the turf by the side of the little spring; he was busily engaged in the useful but somewhat dirty occupation of crimping a fine twelve-pounder salmon, which, notwithstanding the brightness of the day, he had succeeded in eliciting from the neighbouring rapid of Earl's Throw. This operation, which is performed by thoroughly cleansing the newly-killed fish, making some eight or ten transverse cuts in it on each side down to the very back-bone, and subjecting it when thus prepared to the action of the coldest water procurable, adds not a little to its firmness and delicacy, and is the only certain method of preserving between its flakes the snow-white curd, that perishable luxury that is never attainable except on the banks of a salmon river, and that requires pretty good cookery to secure it even there.\*

\* On the Shannon they crimp one side only of the fish, which answers the purpose perfectly, and does no spoil the appearance of it.

On the other side of the spring, with his back propped up against the ledge from under which it rose, reclined the Squire. The day was rather too bright for him, and he had not met with much success on his most favourite throws. His long rod, side by side with the Parson's formidable weapon, was planted in a neighbouring thorn; their lines were reeled up close, and their brilliant flies carefully hooked upon the bars of their reels, while he himself was basking in the westering sun, and admiring, as indeed it was impossible not to admire, the quiet and beautiful scene before him.

Passing over the forest scenery of the foreground, the eye rests upon the short and shelving rapid of Earl's Throw, disturbing by its long tail of sparkling ripples the broad still reach of river, which, nearly a mile in length, lies between it and the Captain's Rock. Between these two narrows the water spreads out into a sheet of two or three hundred yards from shore to shore, both banks fringed, more or less densely, with plantations and timber trees; and beyond them rises that rough ridge of limestone rock, which, craggy and feathered from



top to bottom with larch and ash, again contracts the stream into a channel so narrow, that an expert hand might throw a fly across it: this forms the head of the Captain's Falls. Beyond these again, and completing the background of the picture, is seen the town itself, occupying both banks, and clustering round the two abrupt hills which guard the mouth of the river; the highest on the right bank crowned by the church, which, standing out in bold relief against the sky, seemed as it were ostentatiously proclaiming the Protestant ascendancy, and looking down with something like contempt on the less presuming chapel, just raising its head above the houses of the opposite hill. In earlier times these two portions of the town had been connected only by a ford, which, broad, sandy, and safe, then formed the principal, if not the only communication between the northern and southern banks, and gave to the town a name, which, in spite of its long, beautiful, and picturesque bridge, it retains still,—Ballagh Shanie, the Ford of the River.

“How seldom it is,” said the Squire, “that one sees such a beautiful little bit of forest scenery in Ireland! wild, heathy

scenery there is in plenty, and grand and rocky scenery, and desolate scenery without end; but a bit of real forest, such as one imagines a forest to be when one reads of it—such as, despite its high state of cultivation, is to be found somewhere or other in every county of England,—such as nature left it, with scattered trees and natural clumps of hazle and thorn, and turf which fairies would not be ashamed of dancing on, is a thing scarcely to be found in this country.”

“Yes,” said the Parson, who, having completed his task much to his own satisfaction, was contemplating his work and washing his hands at the spring head, “beauty of scenery belongs almost equally to a state of wild nature, and to one of high cultivation; but the intermediate stage, the transition state, the slovenly and makeshift style of cultivation, with its broken walls, treeless hills, half-drained fields, rushy meadows, and crops of ragwort and poppies, is a sad destroyer of the picturesque. There are spots of greater beauty to be found in Ireland than I have met with anywhere, but over how many miles of wretched demi-semi-civilization must you travel to find them!”

“Something like the fine traits in the Irish character,” said the Squire. “By the way, I wonder that your friends the fairies are not thoroughly disgusted with so wretched a state of things, and do not make up their minds at once, take their passage in some of the emigrant ships, and, leaving their desecrated homes, start off for America like the natives.”

“The United States would be a nice place for fairies, would it not?” said the Parson; “such poetic creatures could not so much as breathe in its utilitarian atmosphere. Whatever they may be, depend upon it no class of fairies are republicans. Really, however, I do not know what the poor things would do, were it not for the old raths, or Danish forts; these are their last retreats, but there Superstition holds out stoutly for them still.”

“There are a good many of these raths about here,” said the Squire: “what have the Danes to do with them?”

“Little enough, I believe,” said the Parson; “but have you not observed that every thing old, ruined, disused, or forgotten, on these coasts, is ascribed to the Danes? Ask that fellow who is catching jenkins down

there, where he caught his fish, and he will tell you, on the Danish eel-weir, meaning simply the disused or ruined eel-weir. The name is all that remains to tradition; but it is itself a tradition of those wild and stirring times, when—

‘The hardy Norseman’s house of yore  
Was on the foaming wave,  
And there he gathered bright renown,  
The bravest of the brave.’”

“You do not, then, imagine these raths to have been really the work of the Danes?” said the Squire.

“No more than I imagine the Danish eel-weirs to have been really the work of the Danes. These coasts lay peculiarly open and exposed to the incursions of the sea-rovers; and no doubt, ‘in winning for themselves a gallant name,’ as the song says, they did deeds here which caused that name to be remembered for many a long day. Now and then we can trace a custom or two that is derived from them,—the Beal Fires, for instance, gleam as merrily here on St. John’s Eve as ever they do on the Scandinavian headlands; but I doubt whether the sea-rovers ever settled here: we trace none of their lan-

guage in the names of places ; we have none of the ‘dons’ and ‘wicks’ that we meet with so often on our own coasts.”

“Who, then, are the engineers of the raths?” said the Squire.

“Probably they were the citadels or store-houses of the native clans,” said the Parson ; “but whoever might have been their original architects, there is no question as to who possesses them now. They are now the strongholds of the fairies, where they still grow the fox-glove for their helmets, and the lotus for their slippers, and the astragala for their soap, and many other little household necessities that they could not well do without. And they are as tenacious of their last strongholds as the Knights of St. John were of Malta. Poor things ! if ever they lose these, their order, too, must find its doom ; and for the same reason,—the want of a locality to exist in.”

“I have often wondered at those round patches of rich unbroken turf, that one meets with in so many of their fields,” said the Squire ; “they are pretty enough certainly, besides being a capital field for the botanist : but Paddy, though, Heaven help him ! no



utilitarian, is very little an admirer of the picturesque either."

"He does not dare to break that turf," said the Parson. "There are not many things in the world that Pat is afraid of doing if he have a mind to do them, but that is one; you could not get a man in three counties to dig a spit of earth in one of those raths—no, not if you offered him a hundred pounds for doing it."

"I should be sorry to try the experiment," said the Squire, "unless I had a good many hundreds to spare. Has the trial ever been fairly made?"

"Yes, that it has, to my certain knowledge," said the Parson; "it was made by a friend of mine, a great agriculturist, who had what he called an English farm, and wished at once to improve his estate, and disabuse the public mind of their absurd superstitions. I cannot tell you the precise sum he offered; but, at all events, you might have had half the landlords of the country shot for less money. Not a man would look at it, and he was obliged at last to cut the first turf himself. After that the labourers followed readily enough, for it is only the

first man who is exposed to the fairies' wrath ; and sure enough, to my utter disgust, all the beautiful raths on his property were taken into cultivation, and the fairies were dispossessed."

"And the result," said the Squire, "I suppose is, that the fresh soil produces unusually fine crops, and that the people are fully convinced now that your friend is living under the fairies' especial blessing."

"Why no—not exactly," said the Parson ; "my friend died not long after, and as his affairs turned out to be in a very involved state, his heir could not, or fancied he could not, keep up the place, so he turned absentee, put on an agent, and his English farm now bears as good a crop of ragwort as any in Ireland."

"Well," said the Squire, "I believe there are instances on record—one or two—where an Irish landlord has come to such a conclusion without the intervention of the fairies."

"Very true," said the Parson, "there are such things ; but for all that the Fates have granted him but half his prayer. His raths are cultivated, no doubt ; but he has

not succeeded in disabusing the public mind of any superstitions, absurd or not absurd : on the contrary, he has confirmed them. When he made this bold attempt, the fate of the fairies lay trembling in the balance : had the grand experiment been successful, the whole of this western fairy-land would have been depopulated ; but the balance has turned in their favour, and it will not be in our lives that their property will again be meddled with."

"For all that," said the Squire, "I suspect that their fate is sealed. They must ultimately give way before the increasing wants of an increasing population. Like the red man of the West, they merely hold the country till its inhabitants are ready for it."

"I fear so," replied the Parson ; "but how necessary figures are to every landscape—whenever they do not exist in reality, imagination supplies the deficiency. These fairies are but the creatures of a poetical imagination, created to people solitudes ; we cannot fancy that a beautiful scene should be untenanted."

"Very true," said the Squire. "Take, for instance, that beautiful landscape before

us: what would it be without those eighteen or twenty trout fishers, each party grouped about its own rock in such picturesque attitudes?"

"Very much better than with them," said the Captain, who, unperceived, had just arrived at the rendezvous from Belleek, bringing with him the supplies for luncheon. "Very much better than with them. Hector himself did not work more harm to the fishing than is done by those scamps in their constant and daily mischief. Look at them: there are twenty here that we can see, and at least fifty more of them between this and Ballyshannon that we cannot see, and every dirty spalpeen of them all will not have less than twenty or thirty jenkins strung by the gills on a withey branch or a platted rush; and what are these jenkins but young salmon? Why every single scamp of your picturesque ornaments—confound them all!—destroys more salmon in one day than our whole party does in a week. Just multiply thirty, which is about the average daily destruction of one boy, by the number of boys on the river, and that again by the number of days in the season, allowing twice the

number for Sundays and holidays, and the product will amount to thousands and tens of thousands."

"Upon my word it is quite true," said the Squire: "one really does not think that, when we have a fry of jenkins, we are consuming a whole salmon at every mouthful; but it is so. The wonder is how, with the strict laws that are made for salmon rivers, such a wholesale destruction can possibly go on."

"What is the use of strict laws which you can never put into execution?" said the Captain. "I should like to see you try to do it, so as to interfere with vested rights; and to catch young salmon wholesale is the vested right of these boys."

"But suppose the law does not permit it?" said the Squire.

"There is a law here superior to the law of the land."

"You mean public opinion?" said the Squire.

"No, I do not—I mean the law of the bullet. But, after all, I question very much whether the laws of the land would interfere: it is inconceivable what ignorance of natural



history these laws display on subjects that are much better known; and you must be aware that it is only within these few last years that Yarrell's experiments have fully established the identity of the salmon and the jenkin. There are many, in fact, who do not believe in it yet."

"And what are Yarrell's experiments?" said the Squire. "I, for one, am by no means an implicit believer in that identity. I should require some pretty convincing proof."

"The experiment was this," said the Captain: "he diverted an offset from a salmon river over a bed of loose gravel; over this he built a cage of iron and wire, so firm that the smallest fish could not pass through it, and into this cage he put a pair of breeding salmon. In due time the salmon-graves appeared, and the spawn was laid up; when he took out the parent fish, who, like Saturn, devour their offspring, and then patiently waited for the hatching. The spawn hatched were JENKINS."

"Well, Squire, that is pretty conclusive, you must own," said the Parson; "'seeing,' the proverb says, 'is believing.'"

“Yes, and the result was still more conclusive,” said the Captain. “He thinned down his numbers, so as to give the fish room to grow, and waited to see what would come of them. At the end of every two months he had drawings taken of the jenkins in their several stages, which drawings are in my possession, and which I will show you whenever you please. At first they merely increased in size, but before long they gradually began to lose their black finger-marks and trout-like appearance, and to put on the glittering and silvery armour that we know so well ; till, at last, having fully satisfied himself, and, I hope, you also, he took off the roof of his cage, and turned them into the river, undoubted salmon. And these undoubted salmon are what those rascally boys are stringing up by dozens before our eyes.”

“Well,” said the Squire, “we must make the best of a bad job. If we cannot get rid of the fishing-boys, at least we can ornament our sketch-books with them ; for I contend, as I said before, that the scene would not be half what it is without them.”

“There are some more picturesque figures

for your sketch-book," said the Parson ; " for here comes the Barrister from Ballyshannon, with his two rods and his train of followers."

" I do not think those two rods altogether fair," said the Captain. " Tommy Lightly hooks twice as many fish as his master, who counts them all to himself, because he takes the rod in his hand and lands them."

" They all do that at Ballyshannon," said the Parson. " The other day, as I was going over the bridge, I saw the officer in command of the detachment sitting at his window, which overlooks the Great Pool. He was comfortably reading a novel, with his legs dangling over the window-sill, while his man was standing in the hollow of one of the buttresses, working away with the great rod. Just as I passed the fellow hooked a gawl, and sang out, ' Your honor's in him again.' The soldier sprung up, shied his book across the room, rushed out, seized the rod, and lost the gawl, all in two minutes, and then went in to read another chapter, while his man hooked him another fish ; and having seen me looking on, and knowing that I had witnessed the whole transaction, he had the impudence

after this to tell me that *he* had caught a fine twelve-pounder salmon that morning."

"Hillo, Parson!" shouted the Barrister from as far as he could hail; "I beat you at Cos na Wonna after all, my boy! When you gave it up I just went back to it and caught your fish for you, and a fine heavy fellow he was."\*

"Was it you or Tommy that caught him?" said the Captain.

"Well, I killed him and landed him at any rate, and a gallant fight we had of it; he ran me down as hard as he could lick, every bit of the way to Kathleen's Fall. I thought he must have gone down it, but I got a pull upon him and turned him, and Tommy here gaffed him, I must say very cleverly, at the head of the rapid."

"Very good," said the Captain; "but who hooked him?"

\* This happens frequently after floods, when the fish are moving. A salmon arriving upon new ground will rise readily at anything, though the fish that have been there for some days will not look at a fly. In the early season this is so common that the third, fourth, fifth, or sixth, time of fishing a throw is nearly as likely to yield a fish as the first.

“Sure then it’s his honour would have hooked him iligant, av he’d had the rod in his hand,” said Tommy.

“But it happened to be in yours,” said the Captain; “we hook our own fish at Belleek, and land them too. You heard of the Squire’s fish yesterday?”

“We have heard of nothing else,” said the Barrister, “and M<sup>c</sup>Aulay has written an ode on it.”

“Yes, and we can catch them on bright days too, which is more than I observe you have done to-day. Here’s a fine fellow, I see, that the Parson has been crimping, and I believe I did catch a schoolmaster at Rose Isle this morning. He rattled me over every rock in the rapid, and at last took heart of grace and went over the fall gallantly.”

“And you lost him?” said the Barrister, with some satisfaction.

“Lost him! not a bit of it; we do not lose our fish at Belleek. The line was precious near the side rock, to be sure, but Pat cleverly held out the gaff for it to run over, till I got up and shortened him in, and then gaffed him out of the great boiling turnhole below.”



“Easy now! easy!” said the Barrister. “Draw it mild — that fall is twenty feet deep. Did any one see you besides Pat, who I know would say anything?”

“Every idler in Belleek,” said the Captain; “and that, as you know very well, implies three-fourths of the population. Because you Ballyshannoners lose your fish whenever you get into a difficulty, you think every one else does.”

“Come, come, boys,” said the Squire, “that will do. Order in the pigmarket! Tell us, Barrister, what news you bring us from Ballyshannon.”

“Oh, the top of good news,” said the Barrister; “in fact, I was coming up the river on purpose to tell you. The boys have had another onslaught on Hector’s nets, and, profiting by their past experience, have done their work thoroughly this time. Hector does not at this minute own more property than he stands in.”

“Well done!” shouted the Captain; “that is worth twenty fish, at least, to us. But how on earth did they manage it? I thought those magistrates had given him policemen enough to defend the whole county. They

must have had a terrible fight—were there many hurt?”

“Not a man on either side. That was the cleverness of it—not so much as a cut finger among them all. That Micky Rowan is a regular village Wellington.”

“You have heard the story, then?” said the Captain.

“Every bit of it; and if you will give me the wing of that fowl—thank you—and a slice of bread and some salt, I will sit down and tell you the whole of it. I dare say your followers are as anxious to hear it as you are.”

“I dare say our boys will most of them be able to set you right if you make any mistake in the telling,” said the Captain, turning round upon them with a significant look; but there was no answering look of intelligence from any one of them.

Paddy is not communicative before a large company, and whether they could or could not set the Barrister right, or whether they had heard one word of the story before, or even whether they cared about it, was a thing altogether impossible to be divined from their looks.

“Do you know,” said the Barrister, “the thing was as near as possible being done in broad daylight, and at the very time when the trial was going on. I wish it had, it would have made a capital story; and it was a well-conceived idea, too. Don’t you remember noticing how the people kept slipping out of the court, and that just at the most interesting part of the trial, and before any one could have the least idea whether the charge would be brought home to the prisoners or not? Would you believe it? the plan was,—then and there, while part of their number were being tried for precisely the same offence, to take advantage of the Peelers being all occupied in the court, and to go down in a body and destroy at once those new nets that Hector was unguarded enough to let on about. It would have succeeded from its very boldness, had they contrived to be a little quieter about it; but Hector, who, to do him justice, is shrewd enough for anything, had the wit to divine that Paddy would hardly leave his friends in trouble, and a court of justice in full swing, without some very powerful attraction, so he applied at once for his *posse*, and marched

them off to Kildoney without waiting for the issue of the trial in which he was so much interested. It was time ; for he found the boys actually in possession, and as they are handy enough at the work, a quarter of an hour more would have been quite enough for them.

“ However, if they were defeated in that, at all events they got back General Micky, whom on their return they found at large, and looking more stupid and more innocent than ever. With such a leader they set about the work in good earnest, and by the next morning all their plans were arranged.

“ When I got back to Ballyshannon yesterday evening, after catching the Parson’s fish at Cos na Wonna, I must say I was myself astonished to see the excited state of the town, for Paddy generally manages these little matters quietly enough ; and I remember thinking at the time, that if the Peelers suffered themselves to be taken by surprise after such a warning as this, they must be very green Peelers indeed. I little thought that it was part of the plan, and that it was fully intended that they should have complete warning. Soon after dark

detached groups of men began to assemble, without any attempt at concealment, in and about the suburbs of Ballyshannon, and proceeded ultimately in a body to the sand-hills on the south shore of the estuary, the same place whence the last attack was made. Due information of all these suspicious appearances was conveyed to the police-barrack at Kildoney, and our friend the Stipendiary, as sharp as twenty needles, roused up and despatched a few of his men to the opposite point of the estuary, which, as you know, is distant from his station about a couple of miles, and about half a mile more to seaward of the place where, on the opposite shore, the people were assembled. This was somewhere about eleven o'clock. Shortly after our boys filled a large boat with men, intending, apparently, to pass, under cover of the darkness, towards Hector's station; but, as soon as they came near the point, the Peelers opened their fire, which was duly returned, though without loss on either side. This was kept up till the boat had ascertained pretty accurately the number of the defenders, when it was driven back. Soon after this the party, being joined by



another boat or two, put off from the shore in greater numbers, and then lay on their oars, as if waiting for further reinforcements. Information of this, with a request for more policemen, was forthwith sent to headquarters; upon which the whole force, with Hector and Mr. Stipendiary at their head, moved forward. The boats now put off together, and attempted to force the passage, and a constant fire, as constantly returned, was kept up briskly, and renewed at intervals for an hour or two; indeed until a light was shown on one of the heights over Kildoney, when the boats were finally repulsed. The boys then quietly dispersed, and the police returned rejoicing to their barracks; but on arriving there, they at once discovered the whole drift and intention of the plan, for in their absence another and much smaller party had quietly crept down from an opposite direction, had taken possession of the nets, and had totally destroyed them, and the boats, and the gear, and everything connected with the fishing establishment — leaving Hector, as I said before, just as much personal property as he stood upright in.”

“Well done, and cleverly!” said the Captain. “But how is it possible that no one was hurt with all that firing?”

“I suppose people do not hold very straight in the dark, when they have nothing to fire at but the flashes of each other’s muskets; besides, our boys had no particular object to gain, either in hitting or being hit, and I dare say kept their boats at pretty long range.” \*

“It must be all up with the establishment now,” said the Squire. “Hector will not be having more than two strings to his bow, as he calls it.”

“Yes, I suppose so. He went off by this morning’s mail, vowing vengeance against every man, woman, and child, in Ballyshannon.”

“How is he to catch them?” said the Captain. “He could not do it when they

\* Where did all these muskets come from that kept up for two hours this unremitting fire? The author does not pretend to guess, but he suspects that if ever there should be a serious rising in Ireland, more muskets will be found there than Government knows anything about.

sat for half the night under the barrack-windows, how is he to do it this time, when not one of his men were within three hundred yards of them? A man fights at odds with the whole feeling of the country against him. Depend upon it he is off now for good and all."

"Well," said the Squire, "I cannot say that I am at all sorry at this result; fortunate would it be if Lynch law were always as just and always as merciful. The interloping fishery was a thing unjust in itself, ruinous to the markets, destructive to the prosperity of Ballyshannon ——"

"And not a little injurious to ourselves," broke in the Captain.

"Very true — we were sufferers along with the mass. I am glad Hector has got off himself scot free: it was a thing I did not expect. He was a gallant fellow, and did his duty for his employers like a man, and in most parts of Ireland would have been shot from behind a wall. However, he is off now, and good luck to him."

"Bon voyage à Napoléon."

"Qu'il ne revienne en aucune saison."

“Who goes with me to Ballyshannon? I mean to sleep at Cockburn’s to-night, and see what news I can pick up.”

“I cannot, for one,” said the Captain. “I will fish the river down, and join you there to-morrow; but for to-night, the Scholar and I have struck out a plan for getting a boat down the Belleek Rapids, and launching it in the White Cat Cove. I was smoking my pipe there last evening, and the trout were rising almost as fast as they did the other night at Lough Derg. I was thinking all night how I should circumvent them, for the rascals won’t rise where you can get at them, and in most places the banks there are so precipitous that you cannot get near the water at all.”

“I should not wonder if you found your boat a successful experiment,” said the Parson. “I know you can get a boat down there, for I once did it myself; not to catch fish exactly, for the place is too smooth and too sheltered to do much that way in the day-time, but to examine the two caves, in each of which a fairy sits nightly watching the trout in the shapes of a white and a black cat.”

“Did you see anything of them?” said the Squire.

“I am not quite sure,” said the Parson. “I certainly did see something which evidently was watching the trout. As soon as we ran the boat into the cave, it dived into the water in a mysterious and gliding sort of way, without a splash or a sound. The men said it was an otter, but it might have been a white cat.”

“I should not wonder,” said the Squire. “Well, ‘good luck’ to your fishing, whatever you watch to-night.’ We must be moving, for the Parson and I must give the Sod Ditch and Old Eel-weir Throws a good trying as we go down; and I would recommend you, before you go up the river, to fish this Moss Row carefully. The Parson rose a good fish in it not an hour ago.”



## CHAPTER XII.

### A MORNING AT BALLYSHANNON.

Weather too Fine by half—Irish Beggars—The Great Pool—The Bridge of Ballyshannon—Legend of the Fairy Fly—The Abstracted Fly—Legend of the Captain's Throw—Legend of Kathleen's Fall—An unexpected Guest at the Dinner-table.

NEVER was there so fine, so beautiful, or so unpropitious a morning; never had fishermen more execrated the sun's jolly face; and never had sun looked down upon fishermen with a more unconcerned and brazen stare. Breakfast had long been over at Cockburn's, and the breakfasters were spinning chairs on their fore-legs, balancing spoons on the edges of teacups, looking over fly-books, or lazily sorting, or rather disarranging and entangling, materials. The Parson had lounged down to the sunny steps before the inn door, and was yawning about with his hands in his pockets, every now

and then cracking a stray joke with some of the numerous hangers-on, who had disposed of themselves about the broad steps in every attitude of listlessness.

Five or six attendants, each surrounded by a small knot of subaltern followers, were holding the long rods, pulling out the lines, smoothing the feathers of the flies, or feeling the points of the hooks—with their eyes every now and then elevated to the provokingly blue sky, to see if they could distinguish a haze of cloud, or feel a breath of air.

Beggars were there, and ragged boys without number, hoping the demon of *ennui* would put it into the gentlemen's heads to give them a scramble of hot halfpence.

"Come, this will never do," said the Squire, who had taken about ten minutes stumping down the stairs, examining the spare rods, which were lashed to the banisters, and pulling the reel lines into a tangle just out of sheer idleness. "This will never do—we may as well be on the Pool as here. Come down, Parson, I'll give you a place in my boat."

But the Squire's advent was a thing as

earnestly watched for by the beggars as the rising of the sun by the Mussulman Arab; for, in truth, the worthy man's liberality got far the start of his judgment, and shillings and sixpences flowed from both pockets with indiscriminate profusion. And there they stood in every variety of age, sex, and condition—old and young, men and women, widows, whose strapping husbands were waiting for them round the corner, and desolate orphans, whose parents wanted money for the next shebeen house. Here and there stood modest poverty, but its voice was lost in the clamour, and seldom reached the Squire's ears.

Yet, disgusting as this scene was, it was not without its scraps of Irish humour. "May every hair in your honour's head," said a wild old lady, looking at his powdered and pomatumed locks—"May every hair in your honour's head be a mould-candle to light your sowl to glory." And, as he bowed, hat in hand, in acknowledgment, and disclosed his bare crown,—“May the blessed Vargin give you more of them.’

“Thank Heaven,” said the Squire, “I am rid of those torments,” as the crazy boat

crept slowly across the surface of the great pool. "It is my own fault though, I know ;" and he settled himself comfortably in the after-seat with his newspaper in his hand, and his fly trailing in the water astern.

To any eyes but those of fishermen the scene was glorious and lovely in the extreme. The broad and brimming river, smiling in its noon-day brightness, was rolling its quiet and resistless way ; not a break on its smooth current, not a ripple on its glass-like surface, though here and there a slight curling dimple told how surely and continually that calm and peaceful water was gliding in its noiselessness to the great fall below, whose heavy, deep, and ceaseless thunderings, rose in the still air, mixing and harmonising with the sharp tinkling and splashing sound of the rapid above it.

Like a black band across this sunny picture rose the bridge of Ballyshannon, with its deep-shadowed buttresses and its fourteen arches, each pouring its respective current into the deep still pool. There were passengers, and horses, and market-carts passing over it ; while every now and then came a sharp, quick, dazzling glance, which the

sun flashed from the heavy rod as the restless fisherman from the battlements wheeled it over his head and cast his fly into some fresh ripple.

The Parson prided himself, and not without cause, on the length, the lightness, and the accuracy of his line; but in vain did the fly form the correctest of circles round his head; in vain did the line unfold itself in the air, and fall unwavering on the oily surface. The inhabitants of the water, like those of the earth, were basking in the still warm sunshine, though the flashing, startling spring, and the heavy plunge of the sporting salmon, showed more light-heartedness and animation afloat than could be seen on shore.

“It is of no use,” said the Parson, sitting down hopelessly on the thwart and winding up the slack of his line. “It is of no use—the fairy-fly would not rise them now.”

“The fairy-fly!” said the Squire. “What, another of your Erne legends? You may just as well sit down and tell it me, for you will do no good with that long line of yours: you would not have kept on half so long, if



it had not been that you thought the people were admiring you from the bridge."

"I wish Pat Gallagher were not now up the river with the Captain," said the Parson; "he is the boy to tell you that story—more by token, as he would say, as it was to his own father that it happened.

"Pat Gallagher, the father, was not altogether unknown to the voice of fame; he was the crack piper of the three counties, and not a wedding was celebrated but Pat's pipes were put in requisition—he was almost as indispensable as the priest. I doubt whether a marriage would have been considered binding without him.

"One night, after having for six hours enlivened the heels of as pretty a set of boys and girls as ever assembled on the shores of Lough Melvin, he was making the best of his way to his home at Belleek. When on passing the old fort, which you must remember as our landmark in crossing the great bog, he suddenly became aware of the usual signs of fairy presence—the soft blue light, and the burning bush that blazed and blazed—though the fairy flame did not

even dry up the glittering dew-drops that hung on its shining leaves.

“Pat crept to the charmed circle, and cautiously raising his head, saw the tiny and beautiful figures wheeling in their fairy circles; but all was still, and though the light feet touched the dewy turf in precise and accurate time, not a note of music could be heard. ‘By the powers!’ said Pat, ‘it’s not the pipes you’ll be wanting, my beauties, and me standing by.’

“So, taking up his time from the dancers, and suiting the character of his music to their light and aërial movements, he glided softly into a lively strain. And the more he played and the quicker his fingers moved over the pipes, the more joyously and light-somely did the fairies skim their graceful circles, and the brighter did the white thorn glimmer in its soft and unearthly light—it was like the light of millions of glow-worms. There was no stopping, there was no resting. ‘Play up, Pat—play up!’ continually whispered a shrill and spirit-like voice at his ear; and the wind-bag swelled of itself under his elbow, and his fingers refused to leave the notes.

“At length the pale dawn tinged the eastern sky, and the fairy lamps grew dim, and the fairy forms vanished, and the sound of music ceased, and the light, half-heard flutter of fairy wings, told that the ball was ended; and Pat, released for the first time from his self-imposed task, was rubbing his eyes and gazing round him in stupid wonder, when a low voice, soft and musical as the whistle of the golden plover, whispered as it passed him,—‘Take that for your wages, Pat Gallagher!’ But Pat saw nothing, and felt nothing but the light brush of the fairy wings on his arm.

“As, however, he pursued his way to Belleek, he saw by the increasing light of morning a small piece of tying silk, or what ladies call sewing silk, sticking to his coat sleeve; and wanting that morning to catch a salmon, he employed it in tying a fly.

“Wherever that fly fell—in pool or in rapid, in sunshine or in shade, in the liveliest ripple or the stillest calm, there rose a fish; and far more than Pat could carry were his spoils that day.

“And not that day on y, but the next day, and the next; and the next week, and

the week after that ; and every day, except the fated Friday, when fairy gifts have no power ; and in every water, except the Enchanted Throw—for fairies can do nothing against the saints of the Church—everywhere, from the Falls of the Rose Isle to the pool of Ballyshannon, where the fly touched the water, the salmon rose obedient to its call.

“ Pat was growing rich : in vain did his neighbours imitate his tackle and throw in his throws—nothing rose to them ; no curl broke the waters, and their line felt no twitch : and they crossed themselves, and swore by the holy trout of Kill-geever, that it was not Pat Gallagher at all, but the devil in his likeness.

“ What will not whisky accomplish ! in an evil hour, in an unguarded moment, poor Pat let out the secret—and from that moment the virtue departed from the fly ; his hook caught the bank behind him, or his line knotted itself over his head, or fell in a lump into the splashing water, not five yards from his rod : and, in the bad success which attended him ever after on the river, bitterly did he rue the transgression of that

well-known maxim, — ‘that fairy gifts are fairy secrets.’ ”

“And a very good maxim it is,” said the Squire ; “and a very good moral, too, and one worth remembering. The man who shows his friend a killing fly deserves heartily to lose his own chance.”

The laugh which the Squire’s moral reflection produced had not yet subsided when the Captain hailed from the tanyard wall, and begged to be taken in, while his Pat—the son of Pat of fairy memory—was splicing a top, which the weight of the Captain’s long line had damaged.

“And where have you been?” said the Parson.

“Oh, I’ve been flogging away at the Grass Guard and Cos na Wonna ; but I might just as well have flogged the turnpike-road. I think St. Columba has cursed the whole river.”

“By the bye, I met the Scholar, who had come down from Belleek. He told me that yesterday, in the blowy weather, he had taken shelter under a rock at the Grass Guard, letting his line flap about in the wind—that is just his style, as you know—



and that some one had crept up to the top of the rock and had cut away three yards of it, with his pet fly at the end. The wiseacre had no spare casting-line, and was obliged to go home."

A grave yet sly smile crossed the iron countenance of Paddy Mooshlan, the Squire's attendant, which did not escape the quick eye of the Captain.

"Ah, you old rogue! that was your boy Willy," said he; "as clever a scoundrel as his father. I see it, I see it. There's half-a-crown to buy him a halter, and make him remember the Grass Guard!"

"I wonder why that throw is called the Grass Guard?" said the Squire.

"Why, you know," said the Captain, "that Cromwell, for a long time, held the line of the Erne as a military position, and a pretty strong one too. That fort, or *tête du pont*, at Belleek Bridge, defended his right, while his left occupied Ballyshannon; and the Grass Guard, which you know is a deep and very defensible loop of the river, and nearly in the centre of his position, formed the *dépôt* of forage for his cavalry."

"And have you never heard," said the

Parson, "of the chief who lay hid for weeks in the caves of the Captain's Throw, which derives its name from that very circumstance? There he lay in perfect safety in the very centre of the enemy's position — under the very hoofs of their cavalry, who must have exercised every morning over his head."

"The Parson and I," said the Captain, "made a reconnoissance the other day into these caves, and a curious and intricate place it is. Our men carried lights. We made a clue by joining our reel-lines together, and the Parson probed the way with his gaff-handle. We had not gone a dozen yards before the cave branched into two, that again into two more, each of which branches was again subdivided; and the divided passages were so interlaced with each other, and all so narrow, so low, and so much alike, that, had it not been for the clue, we should never have found our way back."

"But the most curious and beautiful part," said the Parson—"indeed the only part which had any beauty, was a place which we named the Captain's Study. It is a round cave, twenty feet across, and pretty much the shape of an oven, where the chief is sup-

posed to have dwelt. A cheerful place it is, too ; perfectly light, with a large opening on the flat between the two falls, its only access being through the labyrinth I have been just describing. Completely round the edge of the cave, between its floor and walls, runs a deep, rapid, stream of water, about two feet wide, an offset from the upper fall ; while the centre, a firm, strong, round piece of limestone, worn into the shape of a mushroom by the action of the current round it, forms as dry, hard, and comfortable a floor as an outlaw could wish."

"But how was your friend fed?" said the Squire. "I presume he did not live on stalactites?"

"Ah! that is the romantic part of the story," said the Parson. "His ladye love used to ride her coal-black steed through the gloom of night, and, eluding Cromwell's patrols, would drop her basket of provisions through a hole in the rock. Once she had well-nigh paid dearly for her devotedness. A party from the Grass Guard saw and chased her. Her good steed would have mocked at the swiftest horse in the rebel army ; but full in the front, and barring up

the passage, came a second troop, which, alarmed by the shots that had been fired at her, had turned out from Ballyshannon. She wheeled her horse, set him full at the river, at that narrow rush of waters which, after her, is called Kathleen's Fall to this very day, and cleared it at a bound."

"Whew!" said the Squire; "fifteen yards at the very least!"

"You may see the hoof-prints where the horse lighted on the hard rock to this very day," said the Parson warmly, for he did not like sceptics, and half believed himself the tales he told.

"Well, they have not such horses as that in our degenerate days," said the Captain.

"And they have not such ladies as that in our degenerate days," said the Parson. "I have found them always a good deal more ready to run after those confounded soldiers than away from them."

The Squire was evidently meditating a wicked repartee; but what it was will be forever lost to posterity, for his rod at that moment was twitched from his shoulder and nearly wrenched out of his hand by a violent jerk at the line.

During the foregoing conversation the boat, under the force of the smooth current, had dragged her light anchor, and the Squire's fly, which, at the end of thirty yards of line, was trailing at the stern of the boat, had entered the head of the rapid, where it lay revolving and playing in the ripple, and looking as like a dancing shrimp as any combination of silk and feathers could look.

A heavy fish, fresh from the ocean and innocent of the deceits of man, had taken it, and was now grubbing away at the bottom, while he was trying to find out what sort of a prize he had caught hold of; the top of the Squire's rod all the while was dipping and bobbing, and recovering itself, as if he had been hooked to a wheel at the bottom, which was slowly and irresistibly revolving beneath the surface. Then came the short warning twitch, which gives notice to see all clear, and the gallant fish dashed past the boat, rattling out sixty yards from the reel with a speed that made the line burn in the rings.

"There he shows!" said Paddy Mooshlan.  
"Blessed Vargin, what a tail!" as the fish



took five or six springs in succession his own full length above the surface.

The line came slack. "Reel up, reel up!" was the cry; but before the Squire could get in his line, the fish had taken advantage of his respite, and had laid himself up, sulky and motionless, under a hidden rock, not five yards from the boat. A touch from the oar fortunately started him, and again he rushed up the stream, and again returned on his own course; but this time the Squire was prepared for him, and, keeping the line tight, prevented him from gaining the bottom.

The boat had now neared the land, and Paddy Mooshlan, who, with his gaff in his hand, his mouth open, and his eyes fixed on the straining line, had been leaning over the gunwale, was pitched, over head and ears, into the deep water as the boat touched the rock. This was nothing to Paddy, who was as much at home in the water as on the land; and the Squire had not landed before he stood on a projecting point as still as the rock itself, with the water just rippling over the iron of his gaff.

Short was the struggle after the Squire

had once touched dry land. After two ineffectual attempts, the fish was turned under the edge of the projecting rock ; the unerring iron, guided by the steady hand of Paddy, entered his back fin, and in a minute he lay gasping and flapping on the turf,—a white, fresh, glittering fish, that turned a good five-and-twenty pounds by the fish-house scales.

“Come,” said the Squire, forgetting how little his skill had to do with hooking it, “I think no one will beat me to-day.”

“Crimp him, Paddy ; crimp him forthwith,” said the Captain ; “never mind your wet jacket, you can change that to-morrow ; then give him ten minutes of the holy spring, and I doubt whether the saint that owns it will get a better supper than we shall this night.”

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE BREAKING UP OF THE PARTY.

The Captain's last Sketch — Autumn a saddening Season — The Street of Belleek — A Contrast — The Farewell — South Shore of Lough Erne — Legend of the Lake.

THERE are few things so utterly depressing to the spirits as the breaking up of a fishing-party. Scenes of past sports and past enjoyments are now viewed for the last time ; pleasant companions, who have shared together the roughs and smooths of a wild, picknicking, campaigning sort of life, are now parting, and, in all probability, never to meet again. This, under any circumstances, is depressing, but with fishermen it is so peculiarly. There is a sort of freemasonry in their craft, that seems to bind men more closely together than they are bound by the common pursuit of any other object what-

ever. Then, again, the time of the year in which such partings must take place is quite in union with these feelings. Beautiful as it may be in itself, autumn is a saddening season. The days are closing in, the leaves are beginning to turn, and though they may not yet have lost one shade of their beauty, though that beauty be even heightened by the variety of their colouring, yet the prevalent idea suggested is that of decay and death, and, be the colouring of the landscape as brilliant as it may, the colouring of the mind is sombre and subdued.

It was with something of these feelings that the Captain closed his sketch-book for the last time, and, taking one farewell view of the Rose Isle Falls as seen through the high arch of Belleek Bridge, turned slowly and reluctantly from the river's bank, and ascended the winding path which led to the village street.

Before the door of the little inn, and looking disproportionately large as compared with it, stood a roomy, well-appointed, comfortable English chariot, drawn by four horses, and fitted with every appliance and convenience which art could execute or imagination

devise. A footman, unmistakeably English, as well by the glossy tidiness of his cockaded hat as by the correctness and unpretending neatness of his quiet livery, was standing in the rumble in the act of receiving the carpet-bags and portmanteaus through the upper windows of the inn. This did not, indeed, require any very unusual exertion or ingenuity, for the window-sills were considerably beneath the level of his head. The Parson, under the carriage, was occupied, much to Mr. Thomas's indignation, in lashing to the old-fashioned and substantial perch stout battens of real bog oak, to be exhibited in his native country in the shape of walking-sticks, as sentimental reminiscences; while the fishing attendants were mostly disposed in pairs, tugging and straining at the rods; the joints of which, exposed for so long a time to the continual alternations of wet and dry, had almost grown together.

But besides this, the whole street was alive with people. Every cabin within the radius of two miles had sent forth its own individual stream of men, women, and children, who now stood grouped round the carriage,



each one anxiously looking out for some opportunity of showing his good-will, and doing an infinity of mischief by way of making himself useful.

But the remarkable thing was (and in an Irish assembly it was very remarkable indeed), that in all this there was no noise, no shouting, no clamour of any kind. Men spoke in whispers. The voices even of the children were hushed. A stranger might have supposed that they were awaiting some national calamity, or packing a hearse instead of a travelling-carriage.

The only countenance in the whole group that was in discordance with this general gloom, was that of Mr. Thomas on the rumble. For two weary months had this wretched man and his carriage been laid up together in ordinary at Ballyshannon,—strange creatures enough, both of them, even there, and stared at daily by the natives with a certain degree of awe and reverence, but both utterly incapable of existence in the atmosphere of Belleek, which contained neither house large enough for the vehicle, nor room magnificent enough for the man. How that man had existed at all so far from London, was a

mystery to the whole party. He had nothing to do, he associated with no one, he took no interest in the fishing, he could not abide whisky-punch, and he professed not to understand one word of the brogue. He had lived at Ballyshannon the life of a chrysalis ; but now, his time of probation past, he emerged, like the butterfly fluttering its wings on its renewed existence. Too well pleased even to swear, he looked with an eye of compassionate benevolence on the provoking blunders of the eager volunteers, mildly restraining their vehemence, and blandly correcting their well-intentioned but mistaken efforts to force the imperial under the carriage-seat.

The Squire himself, who, whenever it suited his purpose, assumed the privileges of age, was bestowing upon pretty Sally some excellent advice, together with an extra sovereign and a paternal kiss. Indeed, all that morning his sovereigns had been rapidly melting into silver, and oozing away from both hands.

At that morning's breakfast the Scholar's place had known him not ; new cares were already occupying his mind ; pink flies, and

blue jays, and golden toppings had already given place to pointers and setters, and, long before the sun was over the hill, he had departed for the grouse-abounding heaths of Barnes More.

The Captain's own multitudinous luggage, including a perfect fagot of fishing-rods, was already secured to one of those inventions of the devil, an outside car, about which his own personal staff was still occupied. His course lay southward to Ballina and Westport by the Sligo mail, and he was waiting only for the departure of the homeward-bound.

At last all was ready. Hands were shaken, blessings interchanged. The Captain led the way in his overloaded convenience, and the carriage followed in his track.

"Then rose from earth to sky the wild farewell." Such a yell, such a combination of huzzaing and pillalooing as never English ears had heard, which the Squire increased tenfold by scattering handfuls of silver from each window. Then jerking up the glasses, he threw himself on the seat fairly overcome.

"Poor people!" he said, "poor people! "how they have been misrepresented! How

little they are known or understood ! What have we done for them ? A few shillings spent here and there, a few kind words, such as, perhaps, they seldom meet with, and see how they return it. Why, this is real sorrow. Where did you ever see such a scene in England ?”

“Never,” said the Parson ; “and never will : this is Pat all over. All impulse and feeling, and real downright genuine feeling, too. All heart-felt, every bit of it ; but not one atom of it permanent, not one grain of reason or reflection in the whole of it. There is not a man that we have left behind us in the street of Belleek, who would not willingly at this moment lay down his life for any one of us, but for all that we shall be forgotten by to-morrow morning.”

“Well, well,” said the Squire, “after all, he is but a caricature of mankind in general. Do not let us quarrel with sincerity ; evanescent though it be, it is a rare quality, and should be prized accordingly.”

“At all events,” said the Parson, “such love suits well for us birds of passage : *aimez moi vite car je pars demain*. I would not

be his landlord ; if it were to gaff my fish or carry my game-bag, there is not a man in the wide world whom I would prefer to poor Pat."

They soon arrived at the cross-roads, when, with waving of hands and mutual good wishes, the car continued its southern road, while the carriage edged away to the eastward, and the Belleek party finally broke up.

Little was said by either Squire or Parson, as the carriage rolled smoothly over the four miles of flat country that intervene between the village and the lake. Both were thinking of the scenes of the past summer, and, perhaps, contrasting them with the life that lay before them ; and there was nothing in the rich but somewhat tame alternations of velvet flax and feathery oats to break the current of their thoughts.

They had now reached the place where the line of hills, approaching the lake, follow the course of its southern shore in a range of cliffy heights, steep, and in many places almost perpendicular, but feathered from top to bottom with wood wherever a tree could find root. From this point the road is continued on a sort of irregular undercliff, con-



siderably raised above the level of the lake, but itself overhung and shaded by the higher cliffs above. Occasionally, when interrupted by a watercourse, it would sink down to the lake shore, and for some hundred yards skirt the very water's edge, but its general level lay fifty or sixty feet above it.

About nine miles from Belleek stands a little wayside public-house, and as the stage to Enniskillen is a long one, it is customary to halt here for a few minutes to rest the horses.

"Come," said the Parson, "let us have one more look at the old place: there is a convenient watercourse here, and in dry seasons it affords not a very bad path to the top of the cliff. I have been up it before, and I can assure you the view is worth seeing."

The Squire, who had never contemplated going farther than to Enniskillen that night, consented readily enough, perhaps more readily than he might have done had he realised precisely what the Parson meant by "a not very bad path."

"Well, thank Heaven, we are out of this," said he, as, puffing and blowing, he

scrambled out of the watercourse, and seated himself on the edge of the cliff. "It is a great bore one cannot see a fine view without scrambling up to the top of a mountain after it."

"Nonsense, Squire," said the Parson, who was younger and in much better wind, "there is no pleasure in this world to be had without trouble. Your scramble up the watercourse is like the shilling you pay at the door of the panorama. You have paid your shilling; now be content, and reap the benefit of it."

"Well, it is a lovely view," said the Squire. "And now I have got my breath again, I am 'free to confess,' as the newspapers say, that three times the price would have been cheap enough; but it was a stiff pull while it lasted."

And really the Squire had by no means overrated the view. It was one of those warm, glowing, still evenings—rare enough in Ireland it must be confessed, but still happening now and then even there,—when every tint is at once brightened and mel-  
lowed, and a warm, comfortable colouring is thrown over the whole picture: it was like

looking through a Claude Lorraine glass. At their feet was spread out the broad, glass-like lake, with its rocks and islets sleeping in the yellow sunshine; to the east, beyond Lord Ely's demesne, was seen, dim and indistinct in its own smoke, the island-town of Enniskillen; while to the west, the country they had been traversing was already partially concealed by a thin, light, blue, hazy mist that the heat had drawn up—so that the trees and cabins, with here and there a bright glittering turn in the river, were seen, as it were, through a veil. In front rose the wooded promontory of Castle Caldwell, backed by the Donegal mountains, now glowing with their purple heather like amethysts in the setting sun.

“It is a singular thing,” said the Squire, after they had sat for some time gazing at the lovely scene, and enjoying the calm, quiet feeling of the warm, still evening; “it is a singular thing that this beautiful lake, from whatever point of view you see it, and whether its waters be high or low, always gives you something the idea of an inundation. Look now at those green islands on the northern shore, do they not

seem like tops of hills emerging from a flood?"

"Not at all singular," said the Parson; "for it is an inundation, it is a flood. Did you never hear of the drowned plains? All that lake that lies before you was once a broad, fertile, thickly populated, and cultivated plain; but judgment was passed upon it, and that land was drowned for the sins of its inhabitants. That happened long ago."

"What," said the Squire, "another story of your friend St. Columba? He seems the grand miracle-monger hereabouts, and from all I have heard of him, I should think him quite ill-natured enough to drown all Ireland."

"St. Columba! Oh, no! ages before him. There was a good rapid river in the saint's time. Do you not remember my telling you of his praying the rock into steps at the great fall at Rose Isle, for the salmon to get up more easily? No, no! this was ages before St. Columba."

"Well, but let us hear the story," said the Squire. "Do they not tell something of the sort at Killarney?"

"Yes, so they do; but any one may see

that they have stolen it from us. Look at that water before you, and see for yourself. Killarney is a lake ; this is what we call it, a drowned plain."

"Well, but the story," said the Squire, "the story—never mind the ownership of it. How had these poor people been sinning?—cheating the monks of their dues, I suppose."

"I dare say they did, for there are few enormities of which they have not been accused ; but the proximate cause of their destruction was an act of disobedience, and a very sentimental one too.

"In the middle of the plain, at the foot of that rock of which we now see only the top—that pointed one I mean, just in a line with Castle Caldwell—where that eagle is now drying his wings—and which, by the way, is still called the Eagle or Erne Rock—there was, and no doubt is now, a fairy spring. The water never rose or sunk in it an inch, let the season be as wet or as dry as it might be ; it never got heated with the sun or chilled with the frost, but throughout every change it preserved its fairy freshness.



“There was one condition on which the people enjoyed this blessing : the rising sunbeams must never touch the water. Why, nobody could say—what misfortunes were to follow, nobody knew ; but there was an old traditionary caution, and every one attended to it. It was only the earliest rays that were dangerous ; for the spring, rising close under the northern face of the steep rock, was completely sheltered during the day.

“In those times there was a young girl. I hope she was better than her wicked neighbours, for she was very beautiful ; and somehow or other I cannot bear to think of a pretty girl being a bad one. However, one thing is certain ; she had a lover, and she met this lover by the side of the fairy well. It was early in the morning, before the sun had peeped over the islands of Lord Ely’s park ; but there was no Lord Ely then, nor park neither. What he said, and what she replied, I do not know, for I was not in their confidence ; but I know that he rolled the stone for her from the mouth of the well, and dipped her pitcher into the sparkling current, and then they talked and

they talked—till at last she vowed that she would leave father and mother and would follow him to the wars.

“They left the spring, and traversed the flowery paths of the beautiful plain till they reached this range of cliffs, where this watercourse now meets the lake; and following its steep ascent, she sat with her lover where we are sitting now, just as the sun threw its level beams upon the landscape, and glanced upon the summit of the Eagle Rock.

“ ‘The spring—the fairy spring!’ said she; and without another word, she rushed down the rugged pathway, retraced her steps across the plain, and gained the foot of the rock. But it was too late. The sun shone brightly on the fairy spring, and the waters boiled and foamed under its influence. It was too late—no force would close the opening. The heavy stone was floated off as if it had been a cork, and a fierce and rushing stream was already filling the hollow. There was no time for pausing now. The flight, which was at first for love, was now for life; and panting and exhausted she again reached this ledge. And when she turned to see

the pleasant plain, and the cornfields, and the villages that yesterday's sun had shone upon so brightly, nothing met her eyes but the broad and tranquil surface of the lake, with its half-flooded islands, and the sharp-pointed Eagle Rock—now itself an island—which rose high above the waters, and gave, as it now gives, a name to the lake—LOUGH ERNE.”

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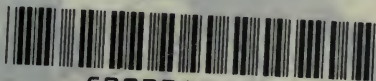
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